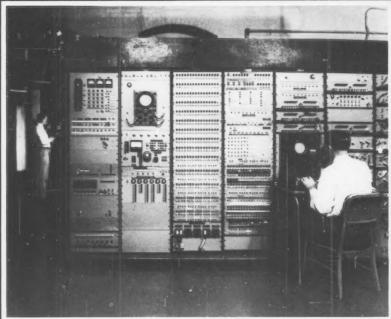
The Baby Bind: Can Journaliets Be Mothers ?

When MBAs take over newsroom

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story building.

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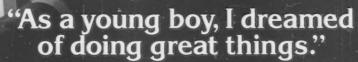
8

Which is why long before people figured on computers, they depended on The Boston Globe.

The Boston Globe

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"My name is Pusko Jezic. And, in my youth, I dreamed of bringing home a medal to my country. The dream came true, both in Helsinki in 1952 and in Melbourne in 1956.

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6 To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths. and to help define or redefine - standards of honest, responsible service . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent 9

> Excerpt from the Review's founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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Few questioned the data that stopped the sexual revolution

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CHRONICLE

High noon in Amarillo

Few people in the Texas panhandle would say the Amarillo Globe-News is a journalistic gem. Its staff is fairly young, and most of its reporters are passing through Amarillo on the way to better jobs in places less dull and dusty than West Texas. The pay is not great, and there aren't all that many exciting stories.

So local business leaders drew some puzzled stares when they demanded an end to the "investigative attitude" at the Globe-News, the generic name for the morning Daily News, the evening Globe-Times, and the Sunday News-Globe. The papers rarely run high-impact series because reporters are too busy pounding out the daily diary of public meetings and traffic fatalities. But over the past couple of years the Globe-News has managed to report a few things that, in this land of boosterism, got folks riled.

Recent examples include series on racial unrest among Hispanics in nearby Hereford and on troubles at West Texas State University, including huge construction-cost overruns on a million-dollar mansion for the university president. Although no one has questioned the veracity of Globe-News reports, some citizens fear that "negative" news hinders the region's efforts toward economic diversification and away from the traditional oil-and-agriculture boom-and-bust.

So, with the backing of Amarillo's most prominent citizen, oilman and corporate raider T. Boone Pickens, Jr., a group called Panhandle Citizens for a Better Amarillo Newspaper launched a high-profile campaign last November to get the newspaper to change its tone or to convince Globe-News owner Billy Morris, of Augusta, Georgia, to sell. It was hinted at several meetings that advertisers not honoring the group's call for a boycott ran the risk of alienating Amarillo's business elite.

This was no ordinary citizens-group protest. It had a \$30,000 budget, a national organizer, and a staff that included employees on loan from Mesa Limited Partnership, Pickens's Amarillo company. "I Canceled!" bumper stickers, anti-newspaper buttons, and handbills circulated all over town. "The Globe-News," the handbills read, "injects unwarranted negative connotations into its stories, leaving the impression that 'something's rotten' in the Panhandle."

The citizens group staged an impassioned rally at the Amarillo Civic Center, where about 1,500 people waved American flags and sang the national anthem. The crowd included some *Globe-News* reporters; several were wearing buttons denouncing Pickens as the "Attila of Amarilla."

The roots of this battle trace back to a Mesa corporate Christmas party in 1986, at which

Pickens complained about the way his business takeovers were being covered. He was also angry over stories about West Texas State University, where he serves as chairman of the board of regents. Pickens asked some 400 employees to cancel their *Globe-News* subscriptions and begin reading *USA Today*, even promising to look into arranging for special home delivery.

Pickens is a very large fish for a pond as small as Amarillo (population: 160,000). His political action committees spend thousands, and he personally donates millions to charity. Mesa Limited Partnership is among the city's largest employers. Pickens bristles at the term "corporate raider" and he expects favorable treatment in the local press. He has an informal media blacklist that at various times has included *Forbes* magazine and syndicated business columnist Dan Dorfman, as well as the *Globe-News*.

So back in 1986, with a figure as important as Pickens openly attacking the Amarillo newspaper, owner Morris decided to jet in for a face-to-face talk. That meeting quickly degenerated into a heated argument, and only through the shuttle diplomacy of local cattle-feedlot owner Paul Engler did a truce emerge. Pickens called off his subscription-cancellation drive, and Engler says Morris told him that he would replace the *Globe-News*'s general manager, Jerry Huff, Jr., by the fall of 1987.

Huff was still in Amarillo last October when the Globe-News ran its eight-day string of articles on racial unrest in Hereford. The paper's reporters had spent six months in Hereford investigating a controversial roundup of local drug users (mostly marijuana) and a local criminal justice system dominated by a district attorney whose ethics have often been called into question. The series also looked at recent successes of Hispanic political candidates and examined a debate about where a new migrant-housing camp should be built. Racism in Hereford is hardly a new topic, and the town's white business establishment complained that the thirty-eight-article series was overblown and stale. (Critics noted that the drug bust had happened twenty-two months earlier.) Hereford's outraged white community asked Pickens for help, and the battle was on again.

This time the Globe-News faced criticism that couldn't be dismissed as the mere eccentricity of a local millionaire. Protesters included Hereford's mayor, an Amarillo city commissioner, members of Amarillo's chamber of commerce, and some members of the Amarillo family that had sold the Globe-News to Morris back in 1972. It also attracted people thirsty for revenge, includ-





Press critics: Some 1,500 people rallied against Amarillo's Globe-News after stories riled important citizens, including T. Boone Pickens, Jr. (above).

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But the overstated flyers and strong-arm lobbying didn't win unanimous community support. Several observers noted that, ironically, the bland Morris Communications Corporation chain has often been criticized for being overtly pro-business. In Amarillo, the Globe-News has for years used chamber-of-commerce-style booster slogans to ornament its front page. The paper's senior staff has gone on trips to recruit new businesses and public projects. And the Globe-News runs a Monday "Business & Industrial Review" section in which merchants can buy ads that look like news stories.

The Amarillo chamber of commerce refused to endorse the advertising boycott, and its board chairman said the chamber ''deeply resents'' being asked to support either party. The ad boycott — targeting Tuesdays lasted only one week, with most merchants simply switching their ads to other days. And so both sides appeared to reach a compromise: the citizens group dropped its demand that the newspaper be sold to a local or regional buyer after the paper said it would appoint an ombudsman and a community advisory board; on the same day that the newspaper announced the changes, the Globe-News also disclosed that general manager Jerry Huff would be reassigned out of Amarillo, to a job coordinating political coverage for the twenty-newspaper Morris chain. Morris officials insist that Huff's departure had been in the works for months and wasn't part of any deal.

Some people in Amarillo think the personal friction between Pickens and Morris makes future conflict inevitable. A clue to Pickens's attitude might be found in a giant banner, yellow with black lettering, that suddenly appeared atop Mesa's headquarters building in December at the time of Huff's departure. "Good-bye Jerry," it said. It was raised by cranes.

The Globe-News building has a sign of its own, cut in stone above the entrance: "A newspaper may be forgiven for lack of wisdom but never for lack of courage." As long as Morris owns the paper, Pickens is around, and Amarillo strives to become a real city, that brave boast is likely to be put to the test.

Terry FitzPatrick

Terry FitzPatrick is the news assignment editor for an Amarillo TV station. In the interest of full disclosure it should be noted that author FitzPatrick has occasionally made his way onto the list of reporters whom T. Boone Pickens won't talk to. In a recent incident at a public meeting — after Pickens had declined to answer a FitzPatrick question but FitzPatrick had stayed around to record Pickens's answers to another reporter's questions — the two engaged in a brief tugof-war over FitzPatrick's tape recorder, which subsequently flew several feet across the room. The recorder, a Sony, survived.

Words against women: the Detroit story

At the Detroit Free Press, feelings about claims of sexual harassment inside the newspaper have often run high. Shortly after a civil suit over such harassment in the paper's composing room was filed in 1984, one of the seven female workers who had sued was told by one of the officials of her union: "You're going to get your \$50,000, and then you are going to get your throats cut." The woman is a deaf mute, so in order to make sure she got the point, she testified, the man "made a motion of bang, bang, bang."

In November a federal jury verdict ordered Detroit's second-largest daily to pay \$159,000 in damages to five of the women for harassment over a ten-year period — the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties — by some of the paper's 122 male composing-room workers. After interest, court costs, and attorneys' fees were added in, the paper paid \$185,000 on December 30, and the five women decided to split the money among all seven plaintiffs. The paper also instituted a plan to eliminate harassment in the composing room.

The case is significant because the women won without having to show economic damage (six of the women have lifetime jobs,

and one is now retired). "These women were printers who loved their jobs and didn't want to quit in spite of name-calling and degradation," says one of their attorneys, Mary O'Donnell. "This case is a precedent [in Michigan] because these women prevailed on the basis of humiliation."

The harassment, as laid out in pretrial documents, depositions, and courtroom testimony, included these examples:

- One woman was told by a male co-worker that "her cunt smelled like an alley cat, and he wished he had a machine gun and he would kill her and get her out of there." Later, the same man brought a can of dog deodorant to the work area, "which he sprayed as she went by."
- Hustler Magazine pictures of masturbating women were left in one woman's locker and positioned so she could not avoid them at her workplace.
- One man sometimes ran around the composing room and pretended to ejaculate, while another made a cardboard penis that he would hold between his legs and wiggle until a roll of tape fell out and "he pretended that he had just been satisfied."
- When he was handed some artwork, a male printer working on a photo-sizing machine cursed and raved that "God damn fucking son-of-a-bitchin" women ain't worth, aren't good for nothing but spreading their fucking legs and getting screwed." When one of the composing-room workers got up from her machine because she "couldn't stand listening to this anymore, day after day," and reported the incident to her su-





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perintendent, the superintendent reportedly told her, "That's probably your fault," then suggested that the man saying those things "didn't want to work in that area today; he's having a bad day."

Many of the men accused of harassment were either the women's union representatives or workers who had risen into management.

Racial or sexual friction often has an economic component, and the *Free Press* composing room was no exception. "What this case is about is the old hot-metal guys, some of whom are supervisors, looking at what they see as a new tradition of women taking men's jobs," says Detroit attorney Charles J. Barr, another of the plaintiffs' lawyers.

In all there are twenty women in the Free Press composing room. Six of the seven who filed suit began work as printers on the eve of the switch from hot to cold type. Most of them were hired by the Free Press in the late 1960s, usually as TTS (teletype setter) operators. The TTS machine - soon to be outmoded - operated like a typewriter, and almost all the Free Press TTS operators were female. Because most of these women also had prior printing experience, once they moved beyond the TTS machines they were able to earn journeyman status in less than one year, although it had taken a traditional seven-year apprenticeship for their older, strictly hot-lead male counterparts to attain the same status. Armed with their journeyman's cards and with knowledge of both the hot- and cold-type processes, the women were able to move quickly into some of the best composing-room jobs, including those involving sophisticated new technologies.

The stresses caused by changes in technology were part of the Free Press's defense, as was the natural stress of deadlines. The newspaper also argued that management lacked control because the union contract allowed only fines or discharges, not suspensions. And, according to Mary Ann Arsenault, another of the plaintiffs' attorneys, the Free Press resorted to traditional rape-case defense tactics - attacking the credibility of the women. "Either the old men are harmless, religious, or quiet old fellows, while every woman either swears, passes around dirty pictures, or in some other way was asking for the treatment she received," Arsenault says.

The suit is also significant because, along with asking for money as compensation, the women asked the newspaper to take remedial action. Shortly after the composing-room women filed suit in 1984, the *Free Press* posted a policy on sexual harassment. It stressed that complaints must be brought to management and that, if an investigation bore out the complaints, "disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including discharge." (No one has been discharged so far.) Since the end of the trial in November, the paper has been holding sexual-harassment aware-

ness classes for management.

The women who have returned to work say that the explicit sexual harassment has stopped, although some of them say the composing-room atmosphere is tense and "sometimes brutal." "We walk in and people turn their backs," one woman says.

How has the *Free Press* covered this saga? Since 1984, when the suit was initiated, the paper has run four stories, the most detailed of which was filed by reporter Joel Thurtell right after the jury's November decision. Printout copies of four versions of that story show that not only was foul language edited out, but all the specific examples of harassment were reduced to a brief summary. Among the quotes removed in the editing process was this one, from one of the plaintiffs: "I really know how a rape victim feels — the *Free Press* first made me prove that I was abused, and then made me prove that I didn't ask the person to abuse me."

City editor Chip Visci calls the story "an example of good editing done on deadline," noting that it was prominently played (in the middle of page three). He does regret, however, that *Free Press* publisher David Lawrence's gaffe — referring to the plaintiffs as "defendants" — slipped into print.

Rosanne Less

Rosanne Less, a recent law school graduate, is a contributing political editor for Detroit's Metro Times.

Words against women: the Newsday variation

These days women can cover almost all the beats that used to be male preserves—especially at New York Newsday, the newest and arguably the most enterprising of New York City's tabloids. The paper seems to have made a conscientious effort to put women reporters on an equal footing with their male counterparts. And yet a recent series of incidents there makes it clear that the women are s'ill not quite at home.

Briefly — and this is one of those multilayered affairs that are difficult to describe briefly — on a Friday in early November, metropolitan editor John Cotter, while drinking after work with two reporters, one male and one female, made a racial slur about a black senior editor, James "Hap" Hairston. Four days later the woman reporter repeated the remark in the newsroom, and it quickly reached the ears of management. That evening, Cotter offered his resignation and management accepted it.

But the stage for Cotter's departure seems

to have been set by sexual - not racial tensions. His resignation came just ten days after women at New York Newsday had met to air some grievances-including complaints about the crudely sexist language that increasingly prevailed in the newsroom. According to several reporters, the newsroom language had gone beyond the usual banter into what one called "pure locker room." Women were being referred to as "bitches, whores, and cunts," as one reporter describes it, and there were "lots of tits and ass and pussy jokes." At the women's meeting, several reporters pointed to Cotter as one of the offenders, along with his boss, New York Newsday editor Donald Forst. Another offender discussed at the meeting, ironically, was Hairston himself, according to several people, none of whom wished to say so on the record. Cotter and Hairston could not be reached, but Forst defended them and himself. "I don't know who uses locker-room language," he says. "I don't think I did and I don't think Hairston or Cotter did. But there were some women who were offended by the language and we're all, men and women, making an effort to improve the language in the city room."

Several aspects of the Cotter incident are in dispute: whether Cotter made the racial remark himself or was quoting someone else, for example, and whether he was a good editor scapegoated by management or an unsatisfactory editor who made one mistake too many. Then there's the question of whether a remark made in private after work hours ought to be the ostensible cause for a person's losing his job. (Some who agree that Cotter had to go point out that the remark was made by a senior editor to his subordinates.)

It seems very likely that Cotter's abrupt departure was intended as a signal to people on the paper that, in the future, no slurs of any kind — racial or sexual — would be tolerated. According to this theory, management's quick response to Cotter's transgression was conditioned by events going back to the mid-70s, when women at Newsday, New York Newsday's Long Island parent, in-

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stituted a class action suit against the paper, claiming sex discrimination. The suit dragged on for seven years, but in 1982 the women won a settlement that included more than just money. "We made gains for the women at Newsday that can never be rolled back," says longtime Newsday staffer Sylvia Carter. "We got women in Albany, women in Washington, women foremen in the composing room, even women paperhandlers."

So when women at New York Newsday began meeting this time around, Elizabeth Drewry, director of the paper's human resources department, was quickly put on the case and, according to reporter Nina Bernstein, "almost before we knew it, what had begun as an exploration became a list of grievances and complaints." Chief among these were the disproportionate number of merit raises given to men (although women make up 45 percent of New York Newsday's reporting staff, they received only two out of ten merit raises last year); the lack of women in positions of authority at the paper (only two women are among the twenty-four people listed in editorial positions on the masthead); and the "atmospherics" - sexist language - in the newsroom.

As it happens; just hours before his resignation, more than a dozen women met with Cotter, Forst, managing editor James S. Toedtman, and editor and senior vice-president Anthony Marro, who impressed the women with his commitment to a newsroom in which "people can be comfortable and do their best work." Marro said he recognized that women and black reporters often didn't receive the same support as white males, admitted that there weren't enough women in masthead positions, and indicated he was committed to getting them there. Cotter's contribution seems to have been a statement that he was not going to "police the language of the newsroom."

Women at the paper like and respect Marro, and he has a large reservoir of good will to draw on - all of which he needs to offset the ill will that Newsday incurred by putting in place an instant old-boy network when New York Newsday was created in 1983. The rationale at the time seemed to be that, starting from zero in such a fiercely competitive market, the new paper had to "hit the ground running" - and, as everybody knows, white male editors run faster than women. "If they had put even one woman in a strong management position to begin with," says Long Island Newsday national correspondent Rita Ciolli, "they could have defused a lot of this."

Since the first women's meeting at New York Newsday in October, Marro has named

five women to top jobs on Long Island and in New York. And most people in the New York newsroom seem to agree that the language there has improved since the Cotter episode — although, interestingly, many women are unwilling to admit that they had been offended by it in the first place. Along with the common fear of being considered prudish, perhaps, New York Newsday women are intensely protective of their newspaper. A number of them describe it as "the best place I've ever worked," citing freedom in assignments and encouragement to take initiative and follow their instincts.

"One of the difficulties with talking about the language problem is that it gives a false sense of the total atmosphere here," says reporter Bernstein. "Even with the macho club operating . . . there's a great sense of fun and mutual respect among talented people here that's not affected by gender."

Brett Harvey

Brett Harvey is a journalist and book reviewer who lives in Brooklyn.

Real news in El Salvador

Last December a young reporter for El Noticiero, El Salvador's newest television news show, broke a story on the death of a political prisoner in San Salvador, apparently the result of tortures suffered while under detention at the headquarters of the national police. That a Salvadoran reporter covered this story shows how much journalism has changed in a country where, in the early 1980s, the civil war's most violent years, people had to wait for the Sunday homily at the capital's main cathedral to get the news.

While the printed press continues to be dominated by conservative papers that limit their war reporting to armed-forces communiqués, radio and TV regularly cover both sides. Broadcast reporters are taking advantage of a new freedom of expression that has taken hold over the last two years. And since the Central American peace plan, with its emphasis on press freedoms, was signed last August, El Salvador's radio and TV have increased their coverage of the guerrillas.

Foreign journalists who have been covering El Salvador agree that broadcast news is constantly breaking new ground. "Just two or three years ago journalists lost their jobs if they did a story the government didn't like, even under the Duarte government," says Doug Farah, a former UPI bureau chief in El Salvador and now a stringer there for *The Washington Post*.



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crew finish up
a story for
the El Noticiero

CJR/Jeremy Bigwood

news show.

Radio continues to be the most popular news outlet, but the country seems to have a growing love affair with TV news. One state-run and four independent news programs compete for an audience of more than two million. News crews roam the capital and organizations of every political stripe have learned the value of the press conference; some days there are two dozen or more in San Salvador alone. This is a vast change from the late 1970s, when TV news programs chronicled the weddings and cocktail parties of the rich and powerful.

Among the television news shows, El Noticiero has won the biggest piece of the country's heart. Its success rests on a fast-paced format and a young, attractive news team that tries to tell both sides of a story. With five reporters all under the age of twenty-six, the show offers more energy than analysis, but provides plenty of solid information. Its fans include many guerrillas. Foreign reporters traveling in guerrilla areas recently have seen rebels congregating to watch El Noticiero's newscast on little battery-powered TVs.

Julio Rank, El Noticiero's station manager, seems an unlikely champion of free expression. A conservative businessman, he recognized early on that solid TV journalism could be profitable. Rank entered the television news world in 1983, when a group of businessmen asked him to run Channel 12. a new independent station. "We did it solely for commercial reasons," he says. "But I believed in looking at news objectively." Rank says that when his financial backers attempted to take control of the aws operation at Channel 12, he left, taking with him some of the station's best reporters and its news director. He then approached Channel 6 with the idea for El Noticiero.

He concedes that *El Noticiero* could not have existed a few years ago. "We put aside political tendencies and give people the facts; it is something new in El Salvador," he says. "But we have to admit that the circumstances

that allow more press freedoms come from the democratic process we have enjoyed in recent years."

El Noticiero's staff has learned much about journalism from its thirty-three-year-old news director, Alberto Barrera, who is also a Reuters stringer. Like a handful of other Salvadoran journalists, Barrera learned about reporting while covering the civil war for foreign news outlets, and was able to put his university training and his journalistic ideals into practice. Until fairly recently, he says, Salvadoran journalism was nothing more than public relations. "Journalists were used to getting payoffs from government officials

and business leaders," he says. "Their salaries were too low for them to have any journalistic ethics." *El Noticiero*'s staff is the best paid in El Salvador.

The staff is too young to have experienced the fierce repression of the early 1980s. Barrera and some of his colleagues received several death threats in those years, which forced them to soften their reporting. In El Salvador, of course, such threats must be taken seriously. Foreign journalists sometimes received warnings, but Salvadoran reporters paid a higher price. In the early 1980s, for example, the editor and a photographer who worked for the small opposition daily *La Cronica* were hacked to death.

Though the political climate has improved, *El Noticiero*'s staff does not take the new press freedoms for granted. "In a society such as ours, nothing is safe," says Carlos Armando Rivera, who did the story of the tortured prisoner. His colleague, Marlene Vallecillos, says she would not want to tackle certain stories — an in-depth look at the 1980 shooting of Archbishop Oscar Romero, for example. "There are stories we know we can't be the first ones to touch."

Ana Arana

Ana Arana is a stringer for CBS News in El Salvador.

Iran-contra footnote: the mysterious scoop

Some stories lift a reporter's career; others become an albatross. Tom Squitieri's slice of the Iran-contra story seems to be doing a little of each.

On December 14, 1986, when he was Washington correspondent for the Lowell, Massachusetts, Sun, Squitieri reported that millions of dollars from Oliver North's Iran arms-sale profits had been funneled to rightwing groups -- he named two controlled by fund-raiser and contra lobbyist Carl Channell - which used the money in domestic election campaigns (see "The Feuding Costellos and the Lowell Sun," CJR, May/June 1987). The North/Channell connection was being uncovered at the time, but not the armsprofits-to-politics link, and Squitieri's electrifying story was trumpeted around the world the next day by the rest of the media, notably The New York Times, which said in a page-one story that it had been unable to confirm The Sun's information.

Indeed, as the weeks passed it seemed as though no one would be able to confirm it, although many journalists were trying. Early last November, in their report, the congressional committees investigating the Iran-con-

tra affair took the time to specifically deny *The Sun*'s story. The report said the committees had "uncovered no evidence to substantiate the allegation" and that they had accounted for "virtually all of the funds received by Channell's organizations during the relevant period, none of which are traceable to the Iranian arms sales."

Most of 1987 had gone fairly well for Squitieri. In April — the same month that Channell pleaded guilty to defrauding the government by using tax-deductible charitable donations to purchase military hardware for the contras — he won an Overseas Press Club award for an unrelated story. In October he became a Washington correspondent for The Boston Herald. That same month he was named "Best Washington Bureau Reporter," for his Iran-contra scoop, in Washington, D.C.'s, City Paper.

But in late November City Paper's "Loose Lips," an unsigned news/gossip column, ran a story that cast doubt on the scoop's legitimacy. ("Lips" author Ken Cummins maintains that the October "best of" honor had been given with tongue in cheek, although few seemed to have read it that way.) The

"Lips" item was quickly followed by stories in Washington's dailies, both on November 25; *The Washington Post*'s story was headlined THE SCOOP THAT STALLED.

Along with the congressional report, what gave the stories weight were the accusations of Carol Matlack, who was the Washington correspondent for the Arkansas Gazette in 1986, and who shared an office with Squitteri at the time his story came out. Matlack, who is now a correspondent for the National Journal, makes a serious charge. "Based on the conversations that I had with Tom and on what appeared in The New York Times," she says, "it appeared to me that he had taken information I had given to him and put it into print without having verified it. I was shocked by that and felt the record needed to be set straight."

Matlack says that at the end of 1986, she, like a lot of reporters, including Squitieri, was trying to check out rumors that North had furnished money to Channell. She says she and Squitieri occasionally shared information, and what made her suspicious is that two pieces of raw information she mentioned to him at the end of the workday on Friday, December 12, seemed to turn up in *The Sun's* big story two days later. One of the details, Matlack says, was a \$5 million figure, an amount that North was rumored to have filtered to Channell. Squitieri took notes, Matlack says, and among other things asked her how to spell "Channell."

The other detail was a list of congressmen whom Channell had targeted for negative advertising, a list that, as Matlack says she mentioned to Squitieri, came from a sixmonth-old UPI report. Matlack says she had written down only nine of the twelve names in the UPI story, and that those were the names she passed along. Squitieri's Sunday story, she says, included "the exact same partial list of names that I had given him on Friday. If you believe he happened to come up with the same names, I have some property in Florida I'd like to sell you."

Squitieri does not deny talking to Matlack before his story was published, but he says that when they talked the story had already been filed — on Tuesday, December 9. It had been set to run on Friday, he says, but was held for space. "There were no additions to that story [after it was filed]," he says. "There were some language changes, some editing — normal procedure — and a couple of names were dropped from the story." He finds it "arrogant" of Matlack to contend that he could not have come up with the \$5 million figure independently. As for the partial list of targeted congressmen: "Those are the names that I had. I got them confirmed

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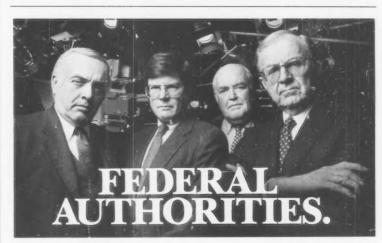
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by an NSC person and other people on the Hill. If they are the same names, fine. All the names were in my story when it was filed on Tuesday." Squitieri also points out that his story focused first on three conservative Senate candida\text{\text{des}} whose campaigns, according to his story, were aided by arms-sale money. Matlack concedes that those names were new to her.

Matlack finds the idea that Squitieri's story was already filed and held for space unbelievable. "This is the hottest story of the year," she says. "Why in the world would they hold it?" But one of Squitieri's editors,

Gary Vincent, although his memory is somewhat fuzzy on the timing, believes he had at least a first draft by Tuesday or Wednesday, and is "ninety-eight percent certain" that he had the final draft when he came to work at 5 A.M. Friday. "It wasn't a story that came out of the blue," he says. "We had been talking back and forth about it for at least a week or ten days." Vincent says other scoops by Squitieri that relied on NSC and other sources have proved true, and he is troubled by the attacks on this one, particularly the article in *The Washington Post*, which he says "has forgotten Watergate."

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The controversy over his scoop resurfaced at an unfortunate time for Squitieri, in the final weeks of a race for the presidency of the 4,600-member National Press Club. As vice-president, Squitieri would normally have been a shoo-in, but Lee Roderick, Washington bureau chief for Scripps League Newspapers, Inc., defied tradition and mounted a challenge, winning the December 11 election by a mere sixteen votes. Roderick says that Carol Matlack had called him, told her story, and encouraged him to run, but that he had already decided to do so by the time she called. "The story did not play a part in my decision to run," he says, but adds, "I don't say it didn't play a part in the election. I'm sure it did; it was so close."

In an attempt to stem the damage, Squitieri posted a "fact sheet" at the press club before the election, in which, among other things, he contended that he could not have been in the office on the Friday that Matlack says she gave him her information because that was the day of the 1986 press club elections. Now, however, he says he was "in and out" on that day, adding, "I never denied I talked with her.

"There are people who believe it is true and there are people who think that it isn't true," Squitieri says. "I've accepted that." He declined to speak to the congressional Iran-contra committees, he says, because he "didn't want to be put in the position of jeopardizing my sources. I probably didn't help myself."

Squitieri is not the only reporter with something riding on the arms-profits-to-politics story. Although his scoop is widely described as an exclusive, Cable News Network joined Squitieri's club last February 20. CNN's Stuart H. Loory, former managing editor of the Chicago Sun-Times, backed up much of Squitieri's story.

Loory now says that his information came from "a very good source that I assume was independent of Squitieri's. This man - a senior U.S. congressman - volunteered the information. He said that he had seen a memo that pointed out that North was channeling funds to Channell for use in domestic politics." Loory, now the executive producer of CNN World Report, says he is "obviously disappointed" that the story has not been confirmed by the Iran-contra committees or anyone else. But he notes that the Iran-contra affair is still under investigation and he adds that "because a congressional committee does not uncover something does not mean it didn't happen." Michael Hoyt

Michael Hoyt is an associate editor of the Review

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Nuclear energy can help America find a way out of our dangerous dependence on foreign oil

Oil imports are increasing to dangerous levels. As the uncertainty in the Persian Gulf continues, the ability to rely on America's nuclear energy becomes more important than ever.

During the 1973 embargo, when we were importing 35% of our oil, prices skyrocketed as supply nose-dived. In the last 18 months, America's dependence on OPEC oil has increased dramatically. We're even more dependent now than we were in 1973. Oil imports have risen by over 25% while domestic oil production has fallen nearly 10%. Looking to the future, the situation is even worse.

In fact, if projections from the Department of Energy are correct, America may be importing as much as 50% of our oil by 1990. seriously jeopardize our national energy security.

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Electricity generated from America's 109 commercial nuclear electric plants saves us over 750,000 barrels of oil a day. Every day. Without nuclear energy's contribution, we would need to import even more foreign oil than we already do.

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America's use of electricity has been growing steadily to fuel our growing economy. At current growth rates, electricity demand will overtake supply in the early 1990s.

New nuclear electric plants should be in planning *now*. But

they are not, despite the fact that most Americans believe that nuclear energy is important and that we will need more. Too many financial, political, licensing, and regulatory uncertainties stand in the way of America's being able to fully utilize its nuclear energy resources. For example, it has taken some plants as long as 12 years to be completed. If nothing changes, that means that a plant begun now might not be operating before the year 2000.

As America's economy continues to grow, America must find ways to keep pace with its growing electricity needs. Nuclear energy can play a major role in meeting those needs as well as keeping us less dependent on foreign oil.

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CAPITAL LETTER

by WILLIAM BOOT

DAQ Enterprises 1300 Conduit St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20005

November 15, 1989

Dear XXXXX:

This letter may pose the most important question you have ever been asked.

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Once you are on the job, DAQ will, for an affordable subscription fee, provide all the support and backup you'll need to flourish. . . .

December 18, 1989

Dear XXXXX:

Congratulations on your new job in Washington! As promised, we are writing to offer advice, help, and professional support services. . . .

Bear in mind, XXXXX, that the unwritten rules of journalistic objectivity require you to behave as if you are intellectually helpless. The Washington news analyst's role is not unlike Ingrid Bergman's in *Casablanca*, when she falls into a swoon and murmurs to Hum-

phrey Bogart, "Oh, I don't know what's right any longer. You have to do the thinking for-both of us, for all of us."

Bogart, playing tough and decisive Rick, replies: "All right, I will. Here's looking at you, kid."

In much the same spirit, Washington pundits (think-tank scholars, political consultants, etc.) do the thinking for the press corps. DAQ is the world's largest clearinghouse for punditry.

Put us at your service. Our easy-tounderstand political and foreign policy analyses will place the day's conventional wisdom at your fingertips almost instantaneously.

And that's not all. Suppose (for the sake of argument) that you come up with an idea or news interpretation of your own. We will express it for you (assuming, of course, that it is not too extreme and does not contradict the conventional wisdom). You simply quote us, thereby preserving your aura of objectivity.

You won't often find yourself catching flak from an editor for using too many sources "who spoke on condition that they not be identified." At DAQ Enterprises (formerly Dial-a-Quote), we speak only on condition that we be *conspicuously* identified. Our sole purpose is to be quoted in the news media.

Here are just a few of the top experts you'll be talking to:

• William Schneider (middle-aged, centrist political scientist, American Enterprise Institute). Quoted some 300 times in major U.S. newspapers in 1987, and the trend has been upward. Designated "Aristotle of American politics" by Boston Globe (1/12/87) in 287-line piece lauding his insight.

Sample quote: "Bush is . . . riding on Reagan's coattails" (Los Angeles Times, 1/4/88).

 Stephen Hess (middle-aged, centrist political scientist, Brookings Institution). Cited roughly 100 times by major U.S. papers in 1987 (typical newspaper reference: "Presidential scholar Stephen Hess... notes that Bush has one of the most impressive résumés of anyone ever to seek the White House" — Christian Science Monitor, 12/28/87). Hess says that in 1987 he fielded about twelve reporters' calls per workday. That made for a rough annual average of 2,880, if you factor in a two-week vacation and ten public holidays. As Hess says, "Answering reporters' questions can be very time-consuming."

• Norman J. Ornstein, (middle-aged, centrist political scientist, American Enterprise Institute — but he really needs no introduction). Dubbed "King of Quotes" in Washington Monthly. Known for energetic efforts to return reporters' calls. Reassuring nickname, Norm, neatly describes middle-of-road position. Washington Monthly reporter Steven Waldman called him living embodiment of the conventional wisdom (12/86).

Ornstein quote: "People want a hardnosed, knowledgeable chief executive" (States News Service, 12/29/87).

From a scant two dozen major newspaper references in 1981, Ornstein blossomed until in 1986-87 he was quoted some 600 times in media outlets ranging from *The New York Times* to *Ladies' Home Journal, Sport* magazine, and 700 Club. He has addressed subjects ranging from the trade deficit to tax reform, abortion, pizza, and professional football. Entirely conceivable but as yet untapped Ornstein subject areas include investment strategies, household tips, medical diagnoses, advice to the lovelorn, and best opening lines in singles' bars.

Others in DAQ's stable of experts include former secretaries of state and defense, ex-United Nations ambassadors, and a host of independent consultants, all with steel-trap minds.

To enliven your copy, you can turn to any one of them for a deftly revamped cliché (''A lot of these [campaignspending] loopholes are large enough to drive a rental car through"—political consultant Bob Beckel, *New York Times*, 12/19/87) or a spicy analogy ("In playing for small potatoes with Kuwait we risk losing the big enchilada, Iran"—foreign policy expert Robert Hunter, Reuters, 6/11/87; "It is the big enchilada"—Hunter on the INF treaty, Reuters, 12/27/87).

Now, you may be thinking that some of the sample quotes we have repeated above are a bit, well, self-evident. The truth, XXXXX, is that in Washington you can't do without glaringly obvious quotes. Your editors will insist that even straightforward points be bolstered by authorities to enhance the credibility of your articles. It doesn't matter so much what the experts say — it's who they are that counts.

In the era of the sound-bite and the twenty-second news analysis, expertise has taken on an entirely new meaning. The more a person is quoted, the more of an expert he or she by definition becomes; the more he or she is defined as an expert, the more that person will be quoted. Not to take advantage of this perpetual motion machine would be folly for a fledgling Washington journalist. So step aboard, sit back, and enjoy the ride.

Certain nay-sayers have taken potshots at the press corps for relying too exclusively on Schneider, Ornstein, Georgetown U's Michael Robinson, political consultants Bob Beckel, John Sears, Frank Greer, etc. New York Times reporter R.W. Apple, for instance, has accused these experts of purveying "pseudo-facts" that masquerade as reality in the pre-campaign period.

But guess to whom reporters turned for help in assessing the significance of this sort of anti-pundit critique? To the pundits themselves, of course — William Schneider (Boston Globe, 1/12/87), Michael Robinson, and Frank Greer (both, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 1/2/88), none of whom seemed to think the Republic was in grave danger.

Our experts have staying power. They won't let you down.

According to *The Washington Monthly*, some busybodies in the higher reaches of the *Los Angeles Times* once got the idea that their paper was quoting Norm Ornstein too often — sixteen times in 1985 — and imposed an Ornstein moratorium. It didn't stick. In 1986, the paper used him twenty-four times; in 1987, some twenty-five.

To repeat, our experts have staying power. In fact, for a while their very popularity became a problem.

By mid-1989, Norm Ornstein's name recognition as measured in the Gallup poll exceeded that of all politicians he was commenting about, including the president. After he began substituting for Pat Sajak as host of *Wheel of Fortune*, further expanding his news appeal, Ornstein was logging 100,000 journalists' calls per month. Access became difficult. Other leading pundits were swamped as well. This put Washington reporters into one hell of a bind.

Luckily, the seeds of a solution were visible as early as October 1987, when an electronic newsletter called *Presidential Campaign Hotline* made its appear-

ance. Each morning reporters could call up that day's edition of *Hotline* on their office computer consoles and read the comments of the pundit of the day. The service enabled journalists to lift quotes without making a call — a blessing when the line was busy, although asking follow-up questions was a mite difficult.

Hotline was an inspiration to us, but it was primitive. DAQ took the basic idea and expanded it exponentially. The result is INSTAQUOTE, a computerized answer to your every news need. Our software specialists have closely studied the writings and utterances of Ornstein, Schneider, and all the others. They have come up with data programs that capture the mindset, the quirks, the sense of humor, and we think the essential spirit of each expert.

Subscribers to INSTAQUOTE (Visa and MasterCard accepted) can call in and conduct actual give-and-take conversations with our electronic savants. A 3-D hologram service is available for oncamera sessions. (Each flesh-and-blood expert is a DAQ stockholder and owns the copyright to his or her software personality.)

Our data programming technique provides an extra dimension which you might not have considered. The passage of time is no barrier to INSTAQUOTE, which relies solely on the written, audiotape, and video record of human thought. Subscribe now and, at no extra charge, you can conduct in-depth interviews with long-silent authorities, among them:

- Walter Lippmann (all topics)
- Colonel Edward House (the fourteen points, Woodrow Wilson)
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- James Madison (the intent of the framers)

This special offer is for a limited time only, so sign up today. Don't short-change your future. Welcome to the perpetual motion machine and good luck in Washington!

Sincerely,

Bob Keister, C.E.O.



COMMENT

Open season on the high school press

The case started as an ordinary piece of administrative censorship of the dreariest and most self-serving type. The principal of Hazelwood East High School in Missouri scanned the proofs of Spectrum, the school newspaper, while the newspaper's faculty adviser waited at the other end of the telephone. After twenty minutes, the principal, Robert Eugene Reynolds, ordered two of the Spectrum's six pages deleted because he objected to the publication of articles on the experiences of three pregnant students and on the effects of divorce. Reynolds communicated his action to his superior, an assistant superintendent, but neither Reynolds nor the faculty adviser told the student staff of the Spectrum, which found that their work had been scrapped when copies of the issue of May 13, 1983, were delivered to the school. Afterward the principal met with the students but offered no more specific reasons for the deletions than "sensitivity" and "inappropriateness."

This rebuff hurt badly enough that three members of the staff - Cathy Kuhlmeier, Leslie Smart, and Lee Ann Tippett — decided to seek vindication in the federal courts. They thus joined a roster of perhaps two dozen instances of high school journalism censorship (out of thousands that have occurred) that were taken to the courts in the 1970s and 1980s, some with favorable outcomes for the student journalists. Since the publication in 1974 of Captive Voices - the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial study which concluded that censorship was "the fundamental cause of the triviality, innocuousness, and uniformity that characterize the high school press'' - federal courts had constructed at least the rudiments of First Amendment guarantees for high school newspapers and journalists. In 1986 the Hazelwood students (by then former students) won a ruling from the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals that the censorship of their newspaper had violated their First Amendment rights.

They could hardly have known that the judicial trail would lead to Justice Byron White, the Supreme Court's iciest opponent of extending First Amendment protections. To Justice White, the idea that a high school newspaper or high school students as journalists had constitutional rights beyond the reach of administrators was not only wrong but refutable on more grounds than had occurred to the original

In his majority opinion Justice White laid out a spectrum of justifications for administrators determined to do as they please with the content of the student press. Immature audiences needed protection. The privacy of individuals dimly identified in the censored stories had to be safeguarded. Most of all, the school had to be able to dissociate itself from embarrassing student opinions; censorship, Justice White said, was one proper way to do so. The underlying rationale was that the school newspaper was part of the curriculum and that the school could control the curriculum as it pleased. White thus sided with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which for years has been claiming that the student press has no constitutional standing. He did not bother to rebut the decisions of the last dozen years that had so painstakingly defined student journalists' rights.

Those decisions say — to summarize them roughly — that when a school administration brings a newspaper into being, even within the curriculum, and tells students, as Hazelwood East did, that the paper should foster "free expression" and "diverse viewpoints," it has gone beyond make-believe. It has created a First Amendment entity and must respect it. Curiously, the two newspapers that have been most engaged in past First Amendment cases — *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* — accepted Justice White's fiction that a newspaper can be merely a classroom exercise.

t is easy enough to slide into this position. Young journalists presumably do need guidance; they do need to learn how to act responsibly, and responsibility can be learned in a classroom. But make no mistake: at Hazelwood East the principal stood in no teaching relationship to the student journalists, nor did he seek such a relationship. In his dissent, Justice William Brennan criticized the principal's "unthinking contempt for individual rights," which he said was "intolerable from any state official."

The case may have started from an administrator's thoughtlessness, but it has now concluded in new Supreme Court doctrine, very much in tune with recent assumptions that greater control of what students read and say equals better education. Behind these assumptions lies a fear that student freedoms lead only to recklessness and obscenity. To those who believe this, the best reply lies in a decision rendered in 1977 by a federal district court in a case strikingly like that of the Hazelwood East journalists but ignored by White and his colleagues: "The state cannot constitutionally restrict anyone's First Amendment rights, including those of students, because of mere apprehension of what they might do with them." Indeed, amazingly, the young journalists might even do some good.

Broadcast News: And now, this . . .

Among the many implicit messages of James L. Brooks's wickedly entertaining feature film, *Broadcast News*, is the sobering reminder of how far we've come from WJM in Minneapolis, the mythical TV station, also created by Brooks, that signed off the air a short eleven years ago. The characters, like the technology, seemed simpler then, and the ethical issues did too. Protecting the confidentiality of a source was good (Mary went to jail); the intrusion of a media consultant was bad (Lou threw him out); and whatever Ted's shortcomings as an ideal anchor, at least all of us knew, or thought we knew, what the ideal was.

In the updated world of *Broadcast News*, life is more complex. Sure, no self-respecting journalist could actually *approve* of Tom's decision to enhance a taped, emotional interview of a rape victim by reenacting his originally unrecorded, albeit genuinely tearful, response. But whether the deception was quite as "despicable" as Jane believed is a matter of debate. Movie critics — and, presumably, audiences — generally don't seem to think so; indeed, many

reviewers have faulted the "trivial" nature of Tom's pivotal act as a weakness of the plot. (Of course, such an evaluation misses the point, as explained with such passion by Aaron to Jane: that the road to journalistic hell is temptingly paved — "bit by bit" — with just such trivialities.)

From where we sit, the trouble with Tom's deception as a motivating plot device is not that it is trivial, but that it isn't terribly different from many of Jane's own. Was his replay of those sympathetic tears for the benefit of the viewing public any more manipulative, any more driven by the peculiar imperatives of the medium than, say, her own "brilliant" decision to splice into a news story a heart-tugging shot of a Norman Rockwell painting? Jane's rejection of Tom, and of what he supposedly stands for, may well represent the triumph of journalistic standards — but then again, it just might be an ironic joke.

Such a confounding maze of ethical boundaries, of lines

— "little buggers," in Tom's memorable phrase — that
are drawn, and crossed, and moved! Ah, for the bygone
bliss of Mary and Murray and Ted and Lou, and for broadcast news in black and white.

The Gulf of Credibility

Retired Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, an eyewitness to the infamous 1964 Tonkin Gulf episode, testified eloquently at last April's annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors about the high price the country pays when the press uncritically accepts the official version of events. Five months after Stockdale addressed the ASNE, the press again was heavily dependent on the government for news about military actions — this time in the Persian Gulf. Did the press learn anything in the intervening quartercentury?

As will be recalled, there were two reported Tonkin Gulf battles. The first, on August 2, 1964, was an actual one between three North Vietnamese patrol boats and the U.S. destroyer *Maddox*. Stockdale — who was then a carrier-based pilot — sank two of the patrol boats.

The second "battle," two nights later, was imagined by an inexperienced *Maddox* sonarman who mistook the sound of his ship's own propeller for enemy torpedos. The reported attack on the destroyers *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* on August

Gilbert Cranberg, a former editor of The Des Moines Reg-

ister's editorial page, is George H. Gallup Professor at the

University of Iowa's journalism school.

pringe of the *madaox*:

REVIEW OF ACTION MAKES MANY RECORDED CONTACTS AND

TORPEDOES FIRED APPEAR DOUBTFUL. FREAK WEATHER EF-FECTS AND OVEREAGER SONARMAN MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR MANY REPORTS. NO ACTUAL VISUAL SIGHTINGS BY MAD-DOX. SUGGEST COMPLETE EVALUATION BEFORE ANY FUR-

THER ACTION.

That's not the way it was played in the nation's press, either. Although North Vietnam protested that the August 4 attack was "completely invented and fabricated by the United States," the press assumed the accuracy of what the administration said and repeated its version of events, with-

by GILBERT CRANBERG

4 sent Stockdale into the air once more, but, as he excounted it to the editors, "No [enemy] boats. No attack. False alarm."

That's not the way it was played in Washington, where President Lyndon Johnson rushed to tell the American people in a nationally televised address about the second assault and to announce the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in retaliation for "repeated" attacks. Johnson did so despite receipt of a cable from the task force commander on the bridge of the *Maddox*:

out attribution, as fact. Three among many newspaper examples must suffice:

PRESIDENT ORDERS 'LIMITED' RETALIATION

AFTER COMMUNISTS' PT BOATS RENEW RAIDS

President Johnson has ordered retaliatory action against gunboats and "certain supporting facilities" in North Vietnam after renewed attacks against American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. . . . This "positive reply," as the president called it, followed a naval battle in which a number of North Vietnamese PT boats attacked two United States destroyers with torpedoes.

- New York Times, August 5, 1964

U.S. WARSHIPS ATTACKED AGAIN

. . . Yesterday's attack was double the scale of the first shooting encounter. . . . — Washington Post, August 5, 1964

President Johnson has earned the gratitude of the free world as well as of the Nation for his careful and effective handling of the Vietnam crisis. The paramount need was to show the North Vietnamese aggressors their self-defeating folly in ignoring an unequivocal American warning and again attacking the American Navy on the high seas. This Mr. Johnson did by a severe but measured response deftly fitted to the aggression: retaliation against the boats and bases used in the attack.

- Editorial, Washington Post, August 6, 1964

A review of press coverage of the two major Persian Gulf incidents — the September 21, 1987, U.S. attack on the Iranian vessel *Iran Ajr* and the October 8 U.S. sinking of three Iranian patrol boats — suggests that the press is being more careful than it was in 1964 to attribute information to the Pentagon, at least in the initial stories and heads. The tendency, however, still is to assume the truth of what the government reports. This is particularly the case in follow-up stories, in captions accompanying graphics, and in editorials; in all three cases non-attribution is commonplace.

According to the Pentagon, the *Iran Ajr* was attacked after it was spotted by night-vision-equipped helicopters as it laid mines in international waters. The ship did carry mines; this was independently verified — albeit several hours after the ship had been seized — when pool reporters stationed in the gulf were allowed to board the ship.

Was the *Iran Ajr* also seen *sowing* mines? The Pentagon said it was, but no pool reporters witnessed it and they were denied access to the helicopter crews; moreover, no reporters were allowed to interview any of the detained twenty-three surviving *Iran Ajr* crewmen. White House and Pentagon spokesmen said that U.S. pilots had pictorial evidence of the mine-laying, but none was produced. Thus, there was no verification of the Pentagon claim, which the press proceeded to accept as fact, as these typical examples attest:

U.S. COPTERS ATTACK IRANIAN SHIP LAYING MINES

. . . [the] stricken craft, which was laying mines under cover of darkness.

—Atlanta Constitution, September 22, 1987

When an American helicopter on patrol in the Persian Gulf happened upon an Iranian vessel seeding mines in international waters far from Iran's coast, it . . . attacked the ship.

- Editorial, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 23, 1987

An Iranian naval vessel was caught in the act and recorded on film as it sowed mines in the international sea lanes of the Persian Gulf.

— Editorial. Los Angeles Times. September 24, 1987

... last week an Iranian vessel laying mines off Bahrain was attacked and captured by American forces.

- New York Times, September 29, 1987

Then, on the night of October 8, according to the Pentagon, "A U.S. military helicopter patrolling in international airspace over the Persian Gulf was fired on from three or four Iranian patrol boats. . . . The helicopter called for help from other U.S. helicopters in the area. As a result, three Iranian boats were destroyed." Again, there were no pool reporters on the helicopters and no interviews with pilots or surviving Iranian crewmen. And, again, although Iran denied that its boats had fired first, the Pentagon's word was repeatedly accepted as gospel. For example:

It was the first time Iranian vessels instigated an attack on American forces since the Reagan Administration began its build-up in the gulf this summer. — Chicago Tribune, October 9, 1987

U.S. helicopter gunships . . . sank three small, armed Iranian patrol boats that had fired on an American chopper.

- Editorial, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 10, 1987

he Tonkin Gulf flimflam was long ago and far away, but memories dimmed by time cannot explain the press's continuing penchant for parroting Washington's official story line. As recently as 1983 the press allowed itself to be misled by a Reagan administration much too eager to attack the Soviet Union for the downing in Soviet air space of Korean Air Lines Flight 007.

According to the administration, the Soviets blasted the plane, killing 269 people, *knowing* it was a civilian airliner. In fact, Air Force intelligence concluded almost immediately, and reported through channels, that the Soviets had mistaken the 747 for a U.S. military plane.

The press, as it must, reported the White House account. Many news organizations, however, went beyond that to embrace it as fact. A *New York Times* editorial that appeared on September 2, 1983, was virtually a White House echo: "After tracking the South Korean intruder for more than two hours, and then observing him at close range, Soviet air defenders had to know the identity of their target — which means someone in the Soviet chain of command is guilty of cold-blooded mass murder."

Marvin Kalb, on NBC, accepted the administration's version verbatim: "One of the [Soviet] jets got close enough to see unmistakably that the 747 was a passenger plane."

And so on, as publication after publication and broadcast after broadcast joined in the chorus of outrage and denunciation.

The first rule in journalism is — or should be — skepticism, which requires, at the very least, attribution. Attribution becomes essential particularly when the source has an ax to grind, as the administration assuredly did in confronting Iran in the Persian Gulf to erase the embarrassment of the

Iranian arms sale. The Persian Gulf coverage that I studied was, to be sure, more rigorously attributed than the coverage twenty-four years age, but not nearly rigorously enough.

A skeptical press is a democratic nation's most important asset. Unfortunately, when a watchdog press is needed most is when it is most in danger of becoming a lapdog — in times of crisis, when emotions run high, when the impulse is to want to believe the government and rally around the flag.

Perhaps the best safeguard is the simplest: a requirement by news organizations that, each day, before reporters, copy editors, editors, and editorial writers begin their tasks, they repeat, slowly, three words — "Remember Tonkin Gulf."

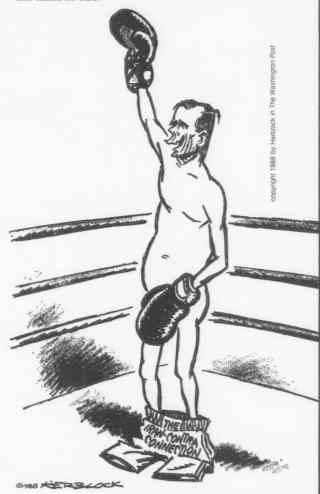
Darts and laurels

Laurel: to Dan Rather and the CBS Evening News, for a much-needed reminder that, contrary to the overwhelming evidence, television interviewing ain't beanbag, after all. In this frustrating age in which presidential press conferences mock their intent, in which administration officials, political candidates, company representatives, and other socalled newsmakers come expertly trained in the art of avoiding touchy topics, and in which TV journalists approach their interviewees with the deference accorded a "guest," Rather's persistent refusal, in that now-famous interview, to let Vice President Bush direct the course of the discussion was a welcome departure from the norm. At a post-interview press conference, Rather remarked that, for him, the only surprise had been that Bush wouldn't answer his questions. Far more surprising to the world at large, however (judging from all the fuss), was the fact that tough, embarrassing, crucial questions were asked — and asked again and again and again.

Dart: to the Pasadena, California, Star-News. On November 23, the paper ran a thorny pre-Rose Bowl piece by columnist Tom Bassing in which he satirized the contrast between the city's extravagant preparations for the Tournament of Roses parade and its callous neglect of the homeless and poor. On November 25, however, responding to critical "talk at City Hall," "disgust" at the column expressed during the parade queen's breakfast, and complaints from a reader who phoned to say that "I hate hearing that kind of thing," executive editor Patty Burnett apologized in print. Two days after that, Bassing's column was permanently dropped.

Laurel: to the Spokane, Washington, Spokesman-Review and police reporter Jim DeFede. Acting on a tip, DeFede sought an interview with one George Grammer, a career criminal being held in jail on an assault and kidnapping charge, and, during a five-hour taped meeting, extracted the bloodcurdling confession from Grammer that he was in fact the city's "Shadle Park rapist"—a psychopathic womanhater who had attacked eight people and had marked a number of others, including several judges and a police officer's wife, for rape or for murder. As things turned out,

DeFede's journalistic enterprise was matched by his paper's journalistic restraint: after a series of agonizing discussions within the newsroom, as well as with city law-enforcement officials, on the legal, ethical, and civic considerations of running a story before the accused had been charged, the *Spokesman-Review* responsibly decided to hold its scoop for three weeks to allow the prosecution to contact witnesses and clinch its case.



Laurel: to *The Wall Street Journal* and staff reporter David Wessel, for an inspired follow-up to the two-page ad that ran last fall in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, in which more than 175 c.e.o.s urgently demanded a reduction in the federal budget deficits through the sacrifice of self-interest and a sharing of the burden by all — all, that is, as Wessel discovered, except some of the companies headed by the executives who signed the ad. Among them: the chairman of Bethlehem Steel, which got a special investment tax credit deal last year worth \$130 million (at the

time the ad was signed, Wessel revealed, the company was asking Congress to help pay for its promised pensions for employees); the chairman of Kaiser Aluminum, which in October had successfully lobbied Congress for a change in the investment tax credit rules that gave the company a \$42 million refund in 1987; the chairman of Chrysler, which got a \$78 million special tax benefit in 1986; the chairman of IBM, which was pressing Congress for a special sales tax provision that would cost the government \$100 million; the chairman of Cigna, which was lobbying Congress for . . . Curiously, *Journal* editors chose not to give prominent play to Wessel's piece: it ran on page 70.

Dart: to the Call and Post, "Ohio's Black Newspaper," and staff writer Gilbert Price, for a misguided notion of equal opportunity: Price works on the side as an EEO coordinator for the state's Department of Administrative Services, whose director he favorably profiled in a recent front-page piece.

Dart: to the Long Beach, California, *Press-Telegram*. The paper gave front-page play to most of William E. Schmidt's syndicated *New York Times* piece (January 23) on the growing allegations of financial irregularities in Gary

Hart's presidential campaign, including those made earlier by *The Miami Herald* involving a California businessman. But when it came to Schmidt's third paragraph, in which he reported that new "questions were raised in [the January 22] *Orange County Register*"—a longtime competitor—the *Press-Telegram* balked. Its edited version of Schmidt's pieces informed readers that questions had been raised—but not by whom.

Dart: to the St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch, for toying with the news. As a partner in the National Alliance to Promote Santabear, a "purchase-with-purchase" holiday item offered by the Minneapolis-based Dayton Hudson department store chain, the Press-Dispatch treated readers to a flurry of pieces on Santabear costumes, accessories, and related products; full-page posters for collectors; a sixteenpage special "educational supplement" that used the plushy animal in stories, puzzles, and games; and a full-color souvenir insert featuring Santabear's "summer internship" with the Pioneer-Press. As noted by the regional business magazine Corporate Report Minnesota in its November account of the Santabear blizzard, Dayton Hudson is the paper's largest advertiser.

Notes from the dartboard

The sexism that so pervades, and so diminishes, this business of ours appears in infinite variety. Mercifully, it rarely takes so malignant a form as that inflicted on the women in the composing room of the *Detroit Free Press*, the stunning details of which are reported on page 6 of this issue of the *Review*. Far more subtly, sexism thrives on benign neglect, when otherwise enlightened news organizations fail to recognize social reality and the biological facts of life (see "The Baby Bind: Can Journalists Be Mothers?" page 33). In its most public aspect, of course, the sexist message spreads through headlines, captions, columns, and news, as a recent sampling from the Darts and Laurels mailbag makes depressingly clear.

The Chattanooga News-Free Press, for instance, gave over more than twenty column-inches to assistant sports editor Mark McCarter's misogynistic ravings (and sophomoric nudges and winks) about that "horror of horrors," the assignment by NBC of a female play-by-play announcer for the NFL game on December 27 — "a day that will live in infamy." USA Today illustrated a November 30 Newsmakers piece on California state senator Diane Watson, in which were detailed her many educational, legislative, and civic accomplishments, with a photo of the senator captioned thusly: "Has 'no husband, no kids,' but lots to keep her busy." The St. Lovis Post-Dispatch focused a November 20 report about the Illinois lottery on a man described as the "sole winner" of a \$6 million prize; not until the sixth paragraph of the nine-paragraph story did readers learn that the winning ticket had been purchased by his wife. (As noted by the paper's reader advocate, Sue Ann Wood, the Post-Dispatch had been guilty of an all-too-similar lapse

that same week, when it headlined a story HUSBAND STRICKEN FATALLY: WIFE MANAGES TO LAND PLANE SAFELY; eventually, Wood observed, the story got around to mentioning that the woman was an accomplished pilot with fifteen years' experience who had in fact been at the controls when her husband collapsed.) The Cleveland Plain Dealer refused to publish a letter to the editor from the director of the library at the University of Texas School of Law, in which he criticized Cleveland's prestigious Rowfant Club, an organization for bibliophiles that the letter writer (a nonresident) had been invited to join, for its policy of barring female librarians from membership. And The New York Times ran an uncommonly catty page-one account of last December's meeting between Nancy Reagan and Raisa Gorbachev that put an unfortunate spin on their relationship and sent the rest of the nation's media scurrying for titillating signs of bitchiness. As a sensible editorial in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer put it, "We have a long way to go in learning to understand what is intentionally offensive social behavior by the Soviets and what is not. Just about as far, it seems, as we have to go in eradicating sexism in this country.'

Of course, not all sexism is intentionally offensive, either; sometimes, simple recognition of a problem may be all that is needed to set things right. In the few short weeks between the nomination of the *Financial Times* for a CJR Dart and the day we went to press, for example, the *FT* gave a brand new name — "Observer" — to a long-established column whose original name — "Men and Matters" — was thoughtlessly off the mark. One small step for humankind, one giant leap for the *Financial Times*.

JOURNALISM REVIEW

MARCH/APRIL 1988

When MBAs rule the newsroom

A concerned reporter shows how bottom-line editors are radically changing American journalism

by DOUG UNDERWOOD

hen executive editor Michael R. Fancher outlined his "1986 goals" for *Seattle Times* publisher Frank Blethen, he sounded like any other striving young organization man on the fast track, fresh from the University of Washington with an MBA in hand.

In the memo, Fancher talked about overseeing a reorganization of newsroom management, establishing priorities for the development of senior editors, and serving as liaison with the circulation department to help the *Times* meet its circulation goals. Forty percent of his time, he said, would be spent coordinating the news department's role in marketing and keeping the newsroom budget in line.

Nowhere in the memo did Fancher talk about the news—either overseeing the direction of the newspaper's coverage, participating in news decisions, or helping to develop story ideas.

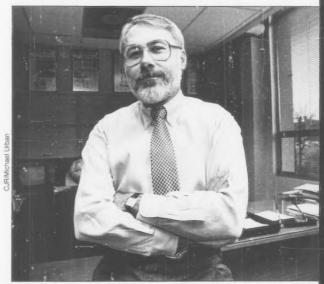
Welcome to the world of the modern, corporate newspaper editor, a person who, as likely as not, is going to be found in an office away from the newsroom bustle, immersed in marketing surveys, organizational charts, budget plans, and memos on management training.

It's not surprising that, as corporations have extended their hold on U.S. newspapers, the editors of those newspapers have begun to behave more and more like the managers of any other corporate entity. It's understandable, too, that in an age enthralled by the arcana of scientific business management — and at a time when the percentage of the

population reading newspapers has declined — newspaper executives have reshaped their newspapers in the name of better marketing, more efficient management, and improvement of the bottom line.

So maybe we shouldn't be worried as the pressures grow

'Some editors resist getting involved in the business of newspapering, fearful they will be tainted by filthy lucre. I believe those editors are doomed'



Michael R. Fancher, executive editor, The Seattle Times

Doug Underwood, a former reporter for The Seattle Times and the Gannett News Service, is now on the faculty of the School of Communications at the University of Washington, in Seattle. Research for this article was underwritten by the Fund for Investigative Journalism. Frank McCulloch, managing editor, the San Francisco Examiner



'A lot of the strength of [many papers] lies in their idiosyncrasies. And professional managers can't stand idiosyncrasies'

on newspapers to treat their readership as a market — to use the words of the business consultants who have proliferated throughout the industry — and the news as a product to appeal to that market.

Well, after spending more than a dozen years as a reporter with *The Seattle Times* and the Gannett Company, I'm plenty worried. And, after interviewing more than fifty reporters and editors around the country, I find a lot of others who believe that profit pressures and the corporate ethic are fundamentally transforming — and not necessarily for the better — the nature of the newspaper business as generations of reporters and editors have known it.

In fact, many of the people I talked to say they feel increasingly unwelcome in a business that once was a haven for the independent, irreverent, creative spirits who have traditionally given newspapers their personalities.

Frank McCulloch, a longtime McClatchy executive who is now managing editor of 'the San Francisco Examiner, notes the 'invidious pressure in top management of the MBA mentality,' and says, 'What has begun here is an inexorable process. Companies have increasingly come under the guidance of professional managers. I can't think of many companies that haven't drifted or consciously moved in that direction. Maybe what I'm expressing is nostalgia. But I still hold a deep suspicion that a lot of the strength of those companies lies in their idiosyncrasies. And professional managers can't tolerate idiosyncrasies.'

David Burgin, the editor of the Dallas Times Herald,

concedes that newspapers have a problem on their hands because, as survey after survey has shown, many younger people simply aren't very interested in reading newspapers. But he deplores the growing dominance of marketing managers.

"I don't think editors are as good or as powerful as they were ten or fifteen years ago," Burgin says. "The new power in the industry is the marketing director. I want to see more swashbuckling editors, like Ben Bradlee or Jim Bellows. But those days are dead. Now it's target marketing and target marketing and more marketing."

Burgin adds, "It's leading to the homogenization of American newspapers. They look alike. They feel alike. It's me-too journalism all over the country."

And many reporters — including some who have been in the business for less than a dozen years — say they already feel like relics in a profession that reminds them more and more of IBM or the insurance industry.

Laura Berman, a former *Detroit Free Press* reporter who now writes a column for *The Detroit News*, says that since Gannett's purchase of the *News* two years ago, the *News* and the Knight-Ridder-owned *Free Press* have competed to see which paper can produce the better "packaged journalism," with its emphasis on color, graphics, and splashy layouts. "The written word — it isn't as important anymore," she says. "If you're a writer you can't like the trend. Everything becomes like *People* magazine and *USA Today*. Basically, it's not as much fun.

"All the editors have come up in the corporate environment," she adds. "That's a symptom of the nineteen eighties — the growing acceptance that you work for a Fortune 500 company that has marketing interests."

Changing times — and The Seattle Times

In many respects, my own career has been a retreat from the trends of the new corporate journalism—until it ran me right out of the business and into teaching. When I began my career at the Lansing, Michigan, State Journal in 1974, my managing editor was a fellow named Ben Burns, an irreverent, aggressive, shoot-from-the-hip newspaperman who helped to launch a probe of the Michigan State University football recruiting program, angered the paper's advertising director by his hard-hitting coverage of local business problems, encouraged in-depth investigations of important local government issues, and took delight in overspending his newsroom budget.

Burns, who went on to become executive editor at *The Detroit News*, was demoted when Gannett purchased the paper. His replacement as editor was Bob Giles, the prototypical Gannett editor, who has just published a 700-page tome, complete with charts on motivation, models of conflict resolution, and graphs on leadership behavior, called *Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice*.

Burns, who has since joined the faculty at Wayne State University in Detroit, doesn't mince words in describing what he thinks is happening to the business. "Modern corporation management and packaging theories are sapping the vitality of creative editors and reporters," he says. "It's the General Motors syndrome. In order to survive, news-

papers try to look like everybody else. People who stand out from the crowd are at risk. And what you breed out of editors is the willingness to take risks with their careers. Now we think we can create good editors by management training. You end up with a CPA mentality among midlevel editors."

When I joined the Gannett News Service's Washington, D.C., bureau in 1976, we served about fifty-five Gannett newspapers out of cramped and cluttered offices in the old National Press Building. Five years later, when I left, Gannett had about eighty-five newspapers and we were working in a modern, hermetically sealed, downtown office cube, complete with nouveau art, glitzy furniture, and the corporate logo stuck on everything in sight. I found it highly symbolic that, a few months before my departure, the company tore out the Gannett News Service library to make way for offices for the executives planning *USA Today*—the quintessential corporately planned and packaged, market-driven newspaper.

y former colleagues, many of whom worked at *USA Today* before fleeing back to the Gannett News Service or leaving for other jobs, report that news meetings at *USA Today* are only half-jokingly referred to as marketing meetings by some staffers. Reporters' copy, they say, is simply grist for editors, who hack it and reshape it into the brief, graphically oriented copy that gives the paper its television feel.

USA Today "was managed to the point where what appeared under your name was irrelevant to what you wrote," says San Francisco Examiner reporter Eric Brazil, a former USA Today bureau chief in Los Angeles and a former Sacramento bureau chief for the Gannett News Service. "At a managed newspaper it beats you down. You either do it their way or you leave."

But it wasn't until I came to *The Seattle Times* in 1981 that I realized how ubiquitous the corporate influence had become and how futile it was to try to escape the changes in the business.

Even though the *Times* is controlled by the local Blethen family (Knight-Ridder owns a 49 percent share of the company), executive editor Fancher has come to epitomize the business-oriented style of editor found at so many corporately managed newspapers. As part of his grooming for the top editor's job, he was encouraged to go back to the University of Washington for a business degree. And, soon after getting it, he began applying his business training to the newsroom organization.

While Fancher entrusts the day-to-day decision-making to his newsroom lieutenants, he keeps a secure grip on the system through a pervasive newsroom bureaucracy. Under Fancher, there has been a proliferation of mid-level editors in the newsroom. These editors, few of whom have much reporting experience, keep a tight leash on the reporters, who work from computer lists of proposed stories that have been approved by committees of editors — and, to a large extent, have already been shaped and packaged by them. Strict oversight of the entire newsroom operation is maintained through countless editorial meetings and memos and

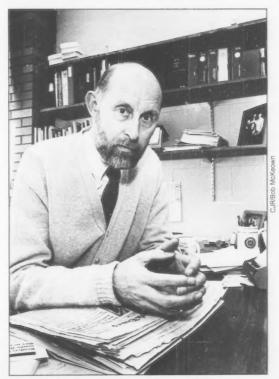
by using computers to check out each staff member's lists of projects, which must be constantly kept up to date.

The *Times*'s approach to management "scrubs the life out of everything," says Dick Clever, who recently left the *Times* to become an editor at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the *Times*'s A.M. partner in a joint operating agreement.

Last year, Clever, a well-respected street-savvy veteran reporter, was passed over for a job as an assistant city editor at the *Times*, at least in part, he says, because a company psychologist who interviewed him during the job selection process reported that he showed little interest in paperwork or bureaucratic routine. (A spokesperson for the *Times* declined to speak about Clever's case specifically, but did say that the interview "was a useful part of the process that was one aspect of the decision.")

"The impulse of their system is to quantify and manage and control all the elements of the product," Clever says. "There are limits to how much you can do that in a newsroom and still have a product that reflects the vitality of a community. As much as Fancher talks about change, I think he's adopted a very rigid approach to newsroom structure. You either adapt to it or get crunched."

'It's the General Motors syndrome. We think we can create good editors by management training. You end up with a CPA mentality'



Ben Burns, former executive editor, The Detroit News

While some reporters have misgivings about Fancher's approach, people involved in the look of the newspaper — artists, graphic designers, layout editors — are thriving under it. And, in fact, under Fancher's direction, the *Times* — a drab, dully written, chamber-of-commerce-oriented newspaper throughout much of its history — has put a pretty face on its once-gray pages.

The newspaper's new emphasis on appearance and bright writing has won it a series of design and news- and feature-writing prizes. As part of Fancher's "margin of excellence" program, readers of the *Times* have been inundated with colorfully packaged special projects and special sections.

At the same time, however, the newspaper's commitment to local news clearly seems to have waned. The amount of local news space is often ridiculously small — sometimes only three pages a day. The newspaper brims with light

features, food sections, and special "how-to" sections—how to manage your personal finances, say, or how to repair your car. But the lack of aggressive local news coverage, combined with the slick, pre-planned news product, gives the feel of a newspaper that doesn't really know what's going on in the community.

Fancher, for his part, strongly defends what he calls "a consensus style" of management that involves all the key editors in the decision-making process, and he counters those who challenge his commitment to hard news by pointing to the number of awards the *Times* has won in recent years, including two Pulitzers (both entries written by reporters who, incidentally, have since left the *Times* and the daily newspaper business). "This newspaper is phenomenally better than it was five years ago," Fancher says. "It isn't better *despite* the system, but *because* of the system."

The eccentric Examiner

When Eric Brazil, a recent refugee from USA Today, walked into the newsroom of the San Francisco Examiner — "I saw the low ceilings, the dim lights, the cruddy environment" — he knew he had come home to the kind of newspaper that is nowadays on the verge of extinction.

For the fifty-two-year-old Brazil, an ex-Gannett bureau chief in Sacramento and Los Angeles, his reporting job at the *Examiner* is a sanctuary from *USA Today*, the tightly managed, editor-dominated, market-driven creature of a purely corporate culture.

"At the Examiner, all they want is to get the news," Brazil says. "If you're motivated by that — if it's the vitalizing force of your life — you'll kill yourself for people like that. But turn it around, at a managed newspaper, it's a degrading experience. They tell you what the news is. They have to put their fingerprints on everything."

Curiously, the *Examiner* — the first paper acquired by William Randolph Hearst — is part of one of the oldest corporate chains in America. However, because the *Examiner*, an afternoon paper, has a joint operating agreement with the morning *Chronicle*, it is virtually immune from the competitive pressures that have become obsessions for many chain-owned newspapers.

But the *Examiner* is not just a throwback to an earlier era of journalism, as is attested to by the fact that the cluttered old newsroom will soon be replaced with modern reporters' cubicles, overhead television screens, and a sophisticated sound system with earphones at each reporter's desk.

That quality of looking both backwards and forwards is exemplified at the paper by its two top editors — executive editor Larry Kramer, a thirty-seven-year-old former Washington Post metro editor, and managing editor Frank McCulloch, a sixty-eight-year-old ex-Time magazine Vietnam bureau chief and longtime McClatchy editor.

A shaven-headed ex-Marine, McCulloch is one of those increasingly rare hands-on, upper-level editors who spend much of their time wandering the newsroom, talking with reporters. For many grateful Examiner veterans, McCulloch exemplifies qualities now seen as inconsistent with MBA journalism: a strong identification with reporters, wisdom based on experience, a no-nonsense view of what's news, and little patience for the administrative burdens that have been heaped on senior editors. "If you asked what's dying out in the newsroom, it's people like Frank McCulloch," says Examiner economics writer Eric Best. "He's like the folks who can build cabinets with their bare hands. How are we going to compensate for that?"

McCulloch came to the Examiner after he was mandatorily retired as executive editor of McClatchy Newspapers. And he speaks with concern about the tough new money managers at McClatchy - even though he acknowledges that sound financial management has probably saved McClatchy from being bought up by a larger chain. Speaking of the emergence of professional managers in newsrooms, he says, "It has its advantages and its disadvantages. It's like life. Everything is a tradeoff. Somewhat to my discomfiture, I have to admit it's sometimes produced better papers." In fact, McCulloch says he has only respect for Kramer, the Examiner's own newsroom MBA. Examiner reporters say that Kramer, like many modern editors, relishes meetings and memos. But Kramer, who once did business investigative reporting at the Examiner, is also respected for his reporting background.

Kramer says that he got his MBA to learn how to cover business, not to become a specialist in newsroom management. In his role as executive editor, he adds, his training has enabled him to devise ways of squeezing enough inefficiencies out of the newsroom to make several important moves — including beefing up business coverage and opening bureaus in Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing — without any increase in the newsroom budget. "My philosophy," he says, "is to get good people, give them a lot of rope, and let them do what they do best. But you have to pick and choose where you make your impact."

A recent edition of *Presstime*, the journal of the American Newspaper Publisher's Association, noted that five of the *Times*'s top executives — the company president, the controller, the treasurer, the vice-president in charge of circulation, and executive editor Fancher — have MBAs. And it cited the *Times* as an example of a newspaper at which the finance manager consults with all department heads and is the key player in all management decisions.

Fancher admits that the *Times*'s financial people have played a big role in allocating news resources. "I think you'll see it even more in the future," he adds. "The era when I, the editor, could say, 'This goes because I'm the editor' is gone."

n fact, Fancher has become something of a proselytizer on the subject of blending the news and financial sides of newspapers. In a piece that appeared recently in the *Gannett Center Journal*, titled "Metamorphosis of the Newspaper Editor," Fancher wrote that the "modern newspaper editor is expected to be a marketing expert as well as an editor. . . . Some editors resist getting involved in the *business* of newspapering, fearful they will be tainted by filthy lucre. I believe those editors are doomed. Sooner or later, their journalistic options will be proscribed by someone else's bottom line. It's a fact of modern business life."

This point of view is shared by many in the industry—indeed, it has virtually become gospel—and in academic circles as well. Steve Star, an influential media marketing consultant who teaches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, says, "The senior marketing official is the editor—that's what a good editor instinctively does." And, in fact, several editors have assumed the dual role of editor and circulation director.

"It's an excellent trend," says Philip Meyer, a former Knight-Ridder reporter and the author of *The Newspaper Survival Book*, who teaches journalism at the University of North Carolina. "I believe in the total newspaper concept. You can't be an excellent editor unless you understand the business side. Some editors — but only foolish ones — are proud they don't know what their budget is."

Corporate newsrooms, tailored 'products'

The move toward corporatization of the newsroom received impetus back in the mid-1970s, when publishers and editors began worrying about studies showing that young people weren't reading newspapers and that sales per household were declining. The American Newspaper Publishers Association hired Star to conduct a series of marketing and strategic planning seminars for editors and senior newspaper executives; the American Society of Newspaper Editors sponsored readership surveys by marketing researcher Ruth Clark, which persuaded newspapers to make greater use of briefs, graphics, anchored features, and interpretive and "help-me-cope" pieces.

A later Clark study found that, while readers wanted "coping" information, they did not want it at the expense of hard news. Some editors saw this as a welcome sign that readers wanted the pendulum to swing back to traditional

Philip Meyer, journalism professor, University of North Carolina



'You can't be an excellent editor unless you understand the business side. Some editors, but only foolish ones, are proud they don't know what their budget is'

news coverage. Others thought that the industry's preoccupation with market studies had become obsessive. "Newspapers can put research to good use — and should," says Eugene Patterson, chairman and c.e.o. of the *St. Petersburg Times*. "But we lose our way and mistake our mission if we think our business is only to give the public what it wants. We're not in this business to lick the public's hand; we're here to tell people what they need to know."

During the seventies, too, newspapers were caught up in the same economic turbulence that was wrenching the rest of U.S. industry. Rapid technological change came to both the newsroom and the back shop. Big-city newspapers did battle with the suburban press, shoppers, television, and cable television for advertisers and affluent readers. From 1977 through 1985, an average of about fifty dailies a year changed hands, many of them purchased by newspaper groups — and the profit pressures on publicly traded newspaper companies escalated.

All in all, the last decade left an indelible message in the minds of many newspaper owners and editors: to survive they must more aggressively manage their finances and tailor their "product" to conform more closely to the interests of their readers.

Indicative of the fixation on finances and newsroom management, and of the role played by the new technology, are the seminars that have been developed for the American Press Institute in Reston, Virginia. At these seminars, which were scheduled to begin in February, newspaper executives will learn how to make decisions affecting all departments by manipulating advertising, circulation, and production

data contained in a computer-simulated newspaper operation. Meanwhile, at the myriad industry conferences held each year, editors repeatedly hear about all the latest technological developments — and about the techniques for winning their acceptance in the newsroom.

At last year's Associated Press Managing Editors convention in Seattle, Louis LeHane, of Thompson Group, a consulting firm, urged editors to "create a culture" in their newsrooms that will ensure that reporters and mid-level executives will not resist the application of new business management practices. To achieve this end, he suggested that management should set up teams, develop lots of dialogue, and create "win-win situations." LeHane ended his remarks on this note of eerie managementese: "Some of the people may be forced to learn by peer pressure, because in a participatory system, the noncontributors — those who can't go from the rejection to the acceptance stage — really aren't tolerated." (Translation: the new newsroom is no place for nonconformists.)

What the troops are saying

So how are the folks in the trenches — the reporters and mid-level editors who put the newspapers together — holding up in this era of test-marketing, readership surveys, audience targeting, and budget planning?

Not always so well, it seems.

• Drex Heikes, a former metro editor at *The Fresno Bee* who is now city editor of the *Los Angeles Times*'s San Fernando Valley edition, describes a budgeting and personnel process at McClatchy Newspapers that has become so burdensome that some editors have little time to do anything else. McClatchy's financial people, he points out, for example, require that newsroom budgeting — once an annual exercise — be continually updated.

"It seems like the bureaucratic and corporate requirements have reached down to the department heads and editors like me," he says. "Those people are swimming in paperwork. It's a tremendous frustration to deal with that,

Quad-City quick takes

With a major snowfall heading for the Midwest, the Davenport, Iowa, *Quad-City Times* (circulation: 58,000) ran a big, bold headline: Is THIS IT? The next day, after eleven inches of snow had fallen, an even bigger headline read WE'RE BURIED! Above, below, and around those headlines, the front pages were packed with a colorful mix of dropheads, refers, pull-out quotes, perspective lines, and more than a half-dozen brief stories, all carefully chosen and shaped to appeal to readers in this Mississippi River farm and farm-equipment manufacturing country.

Spend time around the paper's marketing-minded editors and you'll hear words and phrases — impacts, points of entry, breakout boxes, and bite-sized nuggets of information — designed to court a new generation of busy, impatient readers more inclined to scan a newspaper than to read it.

The *Times*'s editors say they know that's what Quad Cities readers want because they regularly survey them, resurvey them, and then experiment and adjust their formula to keep the renders happy. (The Quad Cities area includes Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and, on the east bank of the Mississippi, Rock Island and Moline and East Moline, Illinois.)

"We try to listen and tailor our product to the marketplace," says publisher John Gardner. "Our readers tell us, "We don't want to work terribly hard, we don't want to struggle through what you're trying to tell us." They like stories they can use for their coffee-break talk."

Times reporters are expected to hold most stories to from four to eight inches and to break longer pieces into lots of sidebars, boxes, and graphs. Editors are praised by their superiors for getting higher story counts and more "impacts" — charts, graphs, photos, heads and dropheads — onto each page, while story jumps are frowned upon. And the features section of the newspaper looks a little like a supermarket tabloid.

"We're trying to put out a newspaper for a whole new generation of newspaper scanners out there who expect to develop a conversational knowledge of what's in the paper based only on reading the headlines," says editor Dan Hayes. "The reality is that newspapers are no longer at the center of people's lives. Other things are."

If this sounds like a version of *USA Today* applied at the local level, it is. Stuart Schwartz, the marketing director for Lee Enterprises, the newspaper group that owns the *Times*, says, "What Gannett is doing with its national newspaper, Lee is doing with its local newspapers. I think Lee is leading the industry right now."

In fact, Schwartz has embarked on a program called Meeting Our Readers' Expectations to try to get the company's dailies in seventeen other cities to emulate the *Times*. He recently circulated charts showing which of the chain's papers had the highest story counts, the shortest stories, the most page-one refers, and the fewest page-one jumps.

Most *Times* reporters — some of whom write up to ten briefs a day — say they've adjusted to conveying information rather than writing stories.

Reporter Harvey Berkman refers to his work as "minimalistic journalism" but, he adds, "overall, the stuff we cover is the same. We just do it with less space and more color." Reporter Rod Thomson says, "In many ways it's much more challenging than just writing a twenty-inch story."

"They've done the studies and surveys that tell them this is what folks in Quad Cities want," adds reporter and assistant city editor Diana Penner. "I agree with the general aim of giving people what they want." But sometimes, she admits, "I'd like to write a news story the way my journalism school teachers taught me how to write a newspaper story."

D.U.

because we're the people who are the guardians of the quality of the newspaper."

• Ivan Weiss, a veteran wire editor at *The Seattle Times*, is outspokenly critical of the kind of management system that has been imposed on members of The Newspaper Guild at the *Times*, among other papers, in an era when many unions are being forced to make concessions. The *Times* now ties pay raises directly to job evaluations, and reporters and copy editors are graded not only for professional skills but also for what in elementary school would be called deportment — e.g., punctuality, cooperativeness, willingness to respond to authority. "Morale is shot," Weiss says. "This system has nothing to do with journalism. It has everything to do with bureaucratic control, and bureaucratic control is the enemy of all journalists."

• John F. Persinos, a former business reporter for *The Orlando Sentinel* who is now an associate editor at *Venture* magazine, says the *Sentinel* has evolved into a market-driven, slickly packaged cash machine. In the business department, he says, this means that the staff spends an inordinate amount of time producing copy for two new weekly supplements devoted to business and to consumer money-

management.

"It's a pernicious trend," he says. "Marketing always came first. You felt like you were a copywriter for the marketing department, cranking out stories so they could sell ads for the sections."

• In Dallas, the once-aggressive news competition has evolved into a marketing battle in which the city's two dailies are trying to appeal to upscale North Dallas readers. The *Morning News* has been particularly solicitous of affluent readers, with its "High Profile" section, featuring pieces about Texas's rich and powerful people, and "Fashion!Dallas," another puffy special section.

"I'm afraid that the *News* and papers like it run the risk of appearing to be slavishly adoring of the power structure," says Brad Bailey, formerly a reporter at the *Dallas Morning News* and now a free-lancer. "The effect on [newsroom] morale was to realize we weren't part of an art or a sacred responsibility but a business to put out a package that was attractive to a market segment. If most journalists realized they were going into that, they'd go into real estate."

• John Kolesar, ex-night news editor at *The Record* in Bergen County, New Jersey, says that packaging and graphics requirements at a place like *The Record* can also make life on the desk pretty unrewarding. "I think what we do with this packaging can get very damaging," says Kolesar, who is now managing editor at the *Courier-Post*, in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. "All the time that's spent in planning and packaging and detail work is time that's taken away from the news and the substance of news. It's a very corrosive thing. My mother didn't raise me to be an interior decorator. I was interested in the news."

Kolesar's views are echoed by reporters who complain that their jobs have become circumscribed by management's obsession with packaging, marketing, and tight writing.

"I don't write anything readers can't get on television," says one *Record* reporter who requested anonymity. "The thing about newspapers is they used to offer an intelligent

Ivan Weiss, wire editor, The Seattle Times



'This system has nothing to do with journalism. It has everything to do with bureaucratic control, and bureaucratic control is the enemy of all journalists'

alternative. Now we're writing for the lowest common denominator. *The Record* and papers like it are running a terrible risk of insulting the readers who've stuck with them for years.''

• Even at Knight-Ridder — long hailed as a corporation that manages its newspapers for quality — some reporters believe that the marketers and the corporate types have gotten the upper hand. Knight-Ridder pioneered the use of personality tests for new employees (see "Knight-Ridder Wants to Know the Real You," CJR, January/February 1978) and of executive pay raises geared to the attainment of "management-by-objective" goals. Now one reporter at the chain's flagship paper, The Miami Herald, says that his newsroom bosses make it clear to feature reporters, through their market research, what kinds of stories they want. Stories that appeal to the yuppy market, suburban readers, and Hispanics are encouraged, he says. "Stories that aren't seen as targeted to a particular audience get short shrift."

his reporter, who entered the business during the social activist days of the 1960s, finds the trend very discouraging. "The change-the-world style of journalism is waning to the point where it's an endangered species," he says. "I don't know but a handful of my friends who are still in the business to make the world a better place."

A closely related theme is sounded by mid-career newspaper people, particularly those who got into journalism during Watergate and Vietnam. They say they are finding it tougher to question authority out in the world when they



'All the time that's spent in planning and packaging is time taken away from the news and the substance of news. It's a very corrosive thing'

themselves are being pressured to become loyal corporate soldiers inside their own organizations.

"You don't see a lot of Watergate-inspired stories in papers in the U.S. anymore," says John Kolesar. "I guess the editors are like the readers: they've apparently changed the kinds of stories they like. They'd rather read about sugarless desserts than about the Democrats who have padded the payroll in the courthouse."

Ironically, many reporters are feeling that way at a time when newspapers — at least, the better ones — are devoting more resources than ever to investigative teams and big, expensive projects designed to win prestigious prizes. Winning such prizes is, of course, a marketing tool. Kolesar, for example, tells about sitting on a committee at the Bergen Record that set up a plan for trying to divine what kind of project might win a Pulitzer.

Seven Knight-Ridder newspapers won Pulitzers in 1986 and some reporters feel that the papers are becoming factories at which editors neglect basic, day-to-day reporting so they can put their resources into high-profile, prize-winning projects. Richard Morin, a former editor and reporter at *The Miami Herald* who is now polling director at *The Washington Post*, says he was afraid this might happen at the *Herald* as its profit picture dimmed. "I don't want to reach a point where every newspaper will have a ten-person investigative team and one person covering everything else," Morin says.

Reporters also note that the character of investigations is changing. Michael Wagner, an investigative reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*, says that newspapers are a "perfect mirror" of the pro-business government of Ronald Reagan and of a population focusing on personal problems.

"The appetite these days is for fairly safe, less contro-

versial, sociological investigative stories," Wagner says. "If you look across the country, you see papers doing a great job of covering prisons and juvenile crime and child abuse. But you don't see people asking how Exxon got to be bigger than five or six countries in the world."

Brad Bailey, formerly of *The Dallas Morning News*, puts it this way: "Do you see a corporation that's in the business of making money going out and investigating other corporations? I don't."

till, whether bottom-line management has led to better — or worse — journalism is an open question. People like Larry Fuller, the publisher of Gannett's Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Argus Leader, make a strong case that many of the country's newspapers, particularly those in smaller cities, have been invigorated by chain ownership.

"We have to change as society changes and everybody has to recognize that," Fuller says. "In my opinion, the problem isn't the newspapers that *have* changed; it's the problem of newspapers that *haven't*. You look at many newspapers and they're still frighteningly dull."

Advocates of change, like Fuller, say, as you'd expect, that history, economics, and technology are on their side. But those of us who worry about the future of the newspaper business protest that we aren't just a bunch of romantic nostalgics, longing for an era of green eyeshades, sloppy management, and hack journalism. What worries us is whether the true values of the business — the craft of writing, the vigor of investigating, the sense of fairness and equity, the gut-level impulse to want to right wrongs — will survive in the new MBA-run, market-driven newsroom.

Eugene Patterson shows how this debate can cut both ways — even in the mind of the same person. Patterson has long been a vocal critic of chain-owned newspapers for letting their concern for short-term earnings replace journalistic concerns. But Patterson is also an advocate of what he calls "whole journalism," the integration of words and images by blending text, illustrations, and page design into a total concept — something that the new technology, by means of which pages can be designed on the computer screen, has already made a reality in many newsrooms.

I want to close this piece with the words of Jim Renkes, a veteran reporter at the *Quad-City Times* in Davenport, Iowa, where the executives have taken the "whole journalism" philosophy to heart (see sidebar, page 28). The newspaper, which is filled with lots of boxes, big headlines, swaths of color, and "bite-sized nuggets of information," is designed to appeal to the busy, modern reader who tends to scan newspapers rather than read them.

The thirty-six-year-old Renkes, who has been with the paper ten years, says he doesn't think many of his younger, newly hired colleagues miss writing the longer, in-depth pieces — but he does.

"A lot of reporters, I think they got into the business to be writers," Renkes says. "They sure didn't get into it for the money. If you take that away from them — well, they might as well have another job. I'm almost melancholy about the whole thing."

The case of the vanishing copy boy

And other tales of hot-type days

by ROBERT MASON

The striking change in the atmosphere of newsrooms that Doug Underwood describes in the foregoing article owes much to the substitution of the computer for the Linotype, and the substitution, in the production process, of reporters and editors for copy boys and union printers. The following recollections of hot-metal days are excerpted from a talk given last year by Robert Mason, who retired in 1978 as editor of the Norfolk, Virginia, Virginian-Pilot.

early a decade has gone by since I, as old printers used to say, took down my slug, and I am going to reminisce this evening. I am going to be a little sentimental about the disappearance, forever, of the hot-type printer, and with him the copy boy, who was the newsroom's most constant liaison to the back shop.

Two printers I had known at *The Raleigh Times* came to *The Virginian-Pilot* when I was there. One was Bob Cole.

First time I saw Bob was in the men's room at the *Times*. That was in 1935. The men's room was split-level. Bob was lying on the floor, passed out, although it was morning, with his head on the lower level and his feet on the upper one. Boyce, the foreman, had an apprentice lug him next door to the boarding-house where Bob lived.

Bob, as I would discover, was an intellectual — self-taught, of course, but bright, informed, thoughtful, and articulate. So was Mr. McCarthy, an elderly man who punched a Linotype keyboard with the motions of a concert pianist. He had owned a weekly paper at Maxton, a village in North Carolina's Cape Fear Valley, but the Depression had killed it. Also, he had been secretary of the Socialist party in South Carolina, which I figure must have been Christendom's least rewarding job.

Mr. McCarthy had iron-gray hair as stiff as a porcupine's needles. J. C. Metcalf, the machinist-operator, called him Curly. J. C. was the other printer at the *Times* who came to the *Pilot*. He was part Cherokee Indian and had a scarred lip from boxing. He presided at the *Times*'s headline machine, and if I sent him a head that wouldn't fit he would rewrite it so it would.

There was a skinny, blondish printer at the *Times* we called Tillie, who was reading law at night and sometimes showed up for work half asleep. Boyce, the foreman, a bald-headed bull of a man forever chomping on a cigar, got on him now and then, and on occasion called him a clockwatcher. Tillie was outraged. He came from Erwin, North Carolina, a mill village where, he said, everybody functioned — got up, ate, worked, went home, slept — ac-

cording to when the mill whistle blew. "I'm a whistle-listener, not a clock-watcher," he said. "You pay a poor compliment to a person like me, who comes from a long line of lintheads, when you call him a clock-watcher. Dammit, we whistle-listeners have our pride."

Fred Holley, who departed the *Pilot* twenty-five years ago for the *Los Angeles Times*, and I have lately exchanged recollections of copy-boy infamy. Fred was especially fascinated by the boy who was sent across the James River to Portsmouth — by ferry; the bridge-tunnels were yet to be built — to bring back the Portsmouth bureau's news package. He never returned; like Judge Crater, Amelia Earhart, and Jimmy Hoffa, he simply disappeared.

Three copy boys impressed me more than Fred's. All were at the *Pilot* during the early years of World War Two. One came to Norfolk on a coal train from West Virginia — sixteen years old maybe, pink-cheeked, gangling, and hungry. What attracted him to the newspaper I do not know; what attracts a bird to a limb? Whatever the answer may be, Georgianna Taliaferro, a lovely member of the news staff who soon would join the Red Cross and be sent near the Italian front, gave him a dollar to buy supper. In an hour he reappeared — still unfed, alas, but sporting a blood-oozing tattoo of a pierced heart on his left bicep.

A neatly dressed schoolboy from Talbot Park reported to the head copy boy for work late one afternoon just as the news staff was revving up for the night's labors. Harry Moore, the oldest person among us, shuffled in from his maritime beat and tossed onto his desk, as he did each day at about 5 P.M., a bag of peanuts and another of peppermints, and two or three reporters and a copyreader ambled over to sample the goodies. Harold Sugg, the church reporter newly celebrated for rewriting the Book of Luke for a Christmas feature, settled his plump young bottom in a metal chair, sorted a bundle of notes, drew from a desk drawer a flute, and upon it blew the scales, up and down.

I had the city desk that night, and Cap'n Jack Spencer, the managing editor, slouched at its outside rim, sucking on a cold pipe and riffling through carbon copies of stories

"This shows the Virginian-Pilot composing room's machinists and floor staff, about 1940. Foreman Red Rawls, wearing glasses, is in the center. Old Folks McKinney, who ran a baseball lottery, stands just to the right of the only woman in the picture."





"This is the Pilot newsroom soon after World War II, perhaps 1947. I was swing editor then, sitting in that night as telegraph editor (next to pneumatic tube). Standing at a reporter's desk is Al Lewis, who entertained us with song, and immediately behind that reporter is Harry Moore, who entertained us with peanuts and peppermints."

that had been turned in, was searching for stuff to file on the Associated Press wire, for which the AP's state head-quarters in Richmond paid him \$10 a week. Duke Manning, the telegraph editor, was grousing with Old Folks Mc-Kinney, from the composing room, who had come to collect for the baseball pool he ran. A reporter named Al Lewis, sitting in a far corner of the newsroom, wearing a gray moustache and a gray Texas hat, sang in a clear baritone voice, "Don't it beat hell the way Jesus loves me!"

The new copy boy came to me at the city desk and said, "I'm quitting. If I worked in a squirrel cage like this I'd go nutty, too."

I assured the young man of my regrets. Things were a mite confused, I conceded, suggesting that war conditions were an influence. I offered profuse apologies and wished him success at school and in any endeavor he might pursue. Also, I walked with him to the door and shook his hand.

When I came back to the desk, Mr. Spencer said, "You sure were polite to that little twerp."

"Yes, sir," I replied, "I was. I tried my best to make a good impression on him. I figure that any young'un with that much perception is likely to own this newspaper one day and I'll find myself working for him."

The third copy boy I won't forget also arrived for induction into the night shift. The head copy boy escorted him to the post office, a block away, to show him how to collect the mail. Then he brought him back and turned him loose.

Right away Duke Manning spotted him. "Get this copy going!" Duke shouted. "I can't set it here!" Duke's long copy spike was jammed with teletyped sheets, properly marked up, from the wire room, together with slips of paper bearing headlines that Duke and an assistant had scribbled.

The kid looked startled. "Copy out, dammit!" Duke bellowed.

Confused but game, the kid gathered up the bundle and got going indeed. When he returned, the head copy boy sent him to Portsmouth for introduction to the bureau there.

About two hours later Mr. Rawls, the composing room foreman, stormed into the newsroom and asked Duke when he was going to send out the market copy — the page, dammit, should have been locked up and stereotyped and saddled on the press by now.

Duke said he had cleared the market page and the rest of the early stuff a long time ago and who in hell was in charge back there anyway? Mr. Rawls blew up. He was redheaded and had a short fuse.

Their fuss was interrupted by a man wearing an eyeshade who came through the door with an armload of copy and asked if this was where it belonged, explaining that he was a clerk at the post office and had found it in the hamper under the mail chute and couldn't think of anywhere else it might have come from.

After that, the head office boy always took a new kid to the composing room and showed him where to put the copy before he even hinted to him where the post office was.

spent a lot of years on newsroom desks, and a lot of hours in composing rooms, overseeing makeup. I've stood across the stone from apprentices, two-thirders, journeymen, foremen, and one half-blind old man who had set body type by hand on the San Francisco Examiner before the Linotype was invented.

About forty years ago a printer named Johnny Miller — I think Miller is right — came to the *Pilot* from Richmond. I chanced to hear him express admiration for Leon Duer, a managing editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* who had been fired—or so the story went — because he wouldn't bend to some downtown pressure to kill or soften up a story. I can't vouch for the facts, but Johnny's attitude impressed me. I decided that if I ever got to be an editor I would try to earn the respect of the printers and everybody else at the newspaper — that I would fail if I became an embarrassment to any colleague, right on down to the carrier boys.

So it came to pass that one afternoon, toward the end of my editorship in Norfolk, Beth Williams, my good right arm, told me that Bob King, who was making up the *Pilot*'s editorial page, wouldn't put in a caption because it contained a rude word. An editorial associate had written it and I had approved it. The word was also in the editorial itself, a direct quote from a person in a high place, and I thought it privileged. I told Beth to tell the foreman, not me, that a printer wouldn't do his job.

But immediately I called her back. This thing could become sticky, I realized. "I'll take care of it," I said.

In the composing room I found King locking up the page after all. "All set, Cowboy?" I inquired.

He looked pained. "Mr. Mason," he replied, "do you think this word ought to be in our paper?" *Our* paper.

"Does it offend you, Cowboy?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, it does," he said.

"Then pull it," I answered. "I'll write you another head." And I did.

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The baby bind: Can journalists be mothers?

In U.S. newsrooms women pay a high price

by MARY ELLEN SCHOONMAKER

couple of weeks after I had my first baby a friend called to see how I was doing. My husband chatted with her on the phone in the dining room — "Oh, she's feeling great" — while I sobbed hysterically in the living room. He wasn't lying: physically, I was okay. I was just on the verge of sinking into journalistic oblivion.

My husband, who is also a writer, had another reason to celebrate besides our daughter's arrival — his first assignment from *The Village Voice*. It was five years ago, unemployment was soaring, and he was about to start what turned out to be a front-page Labor Day piece on the sad odyssey of job hunting in New York with no skills. (One vague want ad called for "men (small)." He applied, only to be rejected because he was too big to clean the grease out of air-conditioning ducts.)

It was a dream assignment, but while he was going to be out reporting, I was going to be at home, alone for the first time in my life with a tiny baby, in this case one that cried until she turned purple. I was convinced that my career was over. My worst-case scenario was coming true: my husband would become a star, and I would spend the rest of my life trying to catch up.

It's easy to see now how ridiculous I was being, but at the time those feelings were real. I was overreacting, of course. But maybe my fears also had something to do with the nature of the news business. A woman has to prove herself from day one — that she's tough enough, competitive enough, aggressive enough. She works those long, hard hours all those years, and then all of a sudden she decides to have a baby and it's like slamming on the brakes.

Jane Eisner, now associate editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer's editorial page, was a city hall reporter when she became pregnant with her first child. She still hadn't told anyone about her condition when she was asked to take on a special assignment that would have required a lot of work several months down the road. "I really would have loved to do it," she says. "Instead, I blurted out, 'But I'm going to have a baby.' The editors said, 'Oh.' I went home and just cried." She was so anxious to keep her hand in things that, during her first maternity leave, she did some stringing for Time.

That sense of missing out, and of needing to prove they can still go the distance, drives some women to return to work very quickly after they've had their babies. Judi Hasson was a congressional reporter for United Press International when she had her son. She could have taken up to two years' leave without pay but she chose not to. "I worked till the day I gave birth and came back nine weeks later," says Hasson, who is now with the Gannett News Service in

Washington. "It was my own need to feel I was still a journalist. Some of my male colleagues said, 'How can you be a mother and come back?' I wanted to show the world this wouldn't interfere with my job as a professional. In retrospect, I could have done that four months later, too."

Sometimes the feeling of being out of it, of being sidelined, can linger for years. "I'm not in retirement," says Laura Kiernan, who was a reporter for The Washington Post before moving to New Hampshire to raise her family. She taught and free-lanced and then worked part-time for the Post's national desk before being hired last year as a reporter for The Boston Globe's weekly New Hampshire section, a job she loves. But she says the demands of her two small children have slowed her pace considerably. She's just trying to keep her head above water until they are in school and she can go at it full-tilt again. "I worry a lot about whether people will feel I've disappeared," she says. "You have to maintain some degree of visibility. If you start to fade, you're done for."

Reason to smile: 'Having children hasn't hurt my career,' says Jane Eisner, the first mother to be named a foreign correspondent



Mary Ellen Schoonmaker is an associate editor of the Review, a job she shares with her husband, Michael Hoyt. They are the parents of two young children.

Almost every woman I interviewed for this story said she had experienced some sort of career-related stress in becoming a parent. These women talked about all kinds of tensions and pressures, including the personal anxiety I experienced, the wrestling with ambition that can take a long time to resolve. Sometimes the worrying eventually proves unnecessary. Jane Eisner at the Inquirer returned from her first maternity leave to be named city hall bureau chief. Soon after, she was sent to London, the paper's first mother to be named a foreign correspondent. After her second maternity leave, she was given charge of the op-ed page. "Having children hasn't hurt my career," she says, although she adds that there have been times when her career has taken a toll on her family life.

But other women are not sure they will ever get back on the fast track. Melissa Dribben was hired by *The Record* in Hackensack, New Jersey, when she was pregnant with her first child. She started work when the baby was five months old. "It was the most stressful period in my life," she says. "I was starting a new job, covering meetings at night, get-

ting home at two or three in the morning. I remember leaving for work, walking down the stairs, saying good-bye, and crying. But I was really ambitious. I wanted to get ahead, and it paid off. I got promoted quickly." Now she has another child and the pull of her family is even greater. She works three days a week, sharing a full-time job with another reporter. "This is the biggest source of conflict in my life," she says, "all those years of wanting a career, and now I want two things just as much. How little you can let your family compromise your ambition is the name of the game. I'm afraid I won't get to where I want to get to, but I'm not willing to compromise my kids."

ome of this stress, the "I'll never win a Pulitzer" kind, is probably unavoidable. A lot of hardworking professional women in all kinds of fields have a hard time adjusting to the limits imposed by having children. At some point they come to terms with their priorities and their family needs and then get their working lives in order. But many of the stresses that were described to me — the kind that relate directly to

what goes on in the office and go far beyond any individual worries about ambition — could be prevented.

Some of these stresses are caused by what workplace experts call "the culture of the industry," both the myths and the realities of how the journalism business is run in this country. And some of them are caused by newsroom policies, both official and unofficial, including those that are ostensibly made for the benefit of women but may actually do them more harm than good.

This is new territory for many newspapers. Some of the women I talked to said they are the first women to have children at their papers, and it is their experiences, for better or worse, that are setting the precedents for the women who come after them. Other papers are literally booming with babies: half a dozen or more women may be pregnant in the newsroom at one time, as the women who entered the profession ten to fifteen years ago reach their middle to late thirties and decide to start families. But there isn't always strength in those numbers. Editors may promote one reporter who comes back from maternity leave and demote another. They may al-

Time off for babies? Abroad, it's a given

Compared to many working women in this country, women in Japan have it pretty good. National law guarantees them a maternity leave that includes six weeks before birth and eight weeks after, at 60 percent of their regular salary. Reporters at Tokyo's Asahi Shimbun have it even better. They can take a year off beyond the basic leave, without pay but with their jobs guaranteed when they return. The female reporters at Japan's leading newspaper won the longer leave through their union thirteen years ago, even though they then constituted only a tiny percentage of the paper's reporting staff.

Mitsuko Shimomura, a reporter for Asahi Shimbun who is now a Nieman fellow at Harvard University, says that Japan's national law also allows working mothers to take breast-feeding breaks. But they are so brief, Shimomura explains, that you just about have to live around the corner from the office in order

to take advantage of them.

In European countries, too, a fully paid adequate leave after birth is a given, with all kinds of options to choose beyond that. In France, the national standard leave is eight weeks before birth, ten weeks after, at full pay, for the first two pregnancies. Leave is longer for subsequent births, and parental leave without pay is available for up to two years. In Italy the standard is similar: two months before birth, three months after, fully paid. Then, if she chooses, a woman can take a one-year child-care leave, at 20 percent of full pay, or work part-time.

One of the most generous leaves in the world is available to working women in Finland. Employees of the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* get one month before birth and ten months after. The paper pays their basic salary for the first three months and the government pays at least 70 percent of their salary

for the rest of the time. The mother can stay at home for up to three years with job security and at least some pay, according to Matti Verkkola, a reporter in the paper's Washington bureau.

Employees at *The Times* of London are entitled to twelve weeks' maternity leave at full salary; those at *The Gazette* in Montreal, Canada, get seventeen weeks at partial pay.

Sheila Kamerman, a professor at Columbia University's School of Social Work and co-author of Family Policy: Government and Families in Fourteen Countries, says the fact that parental leave is public policy in many countries sends a clear message to workers about the importance of children and family life. It's quite a different message from the one American workers are getting.

M.E.S.

Research for this report was provided by Jeanne Heifetz.

low one reporter to share a job and work part-time while forcing another to work nights. The issues of maternity leave and job status are a whole new battleground for women who thought their biggest fights — breaking into the profession and proving their skills — were behind them.

How accommodating is the American newsroom to new mothers? The three most important factors in keeping stress to a minimum seem to be an adequate leave, satisfactory child care, and being able to return to the same job or a comparable one that fits both the paper's and the employee's needs. From my small random sampling, I've come to the conclusion that a newspaper can be one of the best places for a new parent to work. It can also be one of the worst. There are papers that bend over backwards to help new parents feel happy and productive, and there are papers that are run like sweatshops. In between are the majority, places where the editors may not be slave drivers, but aren't all that understanding either.

Given the fact that papers are hiring women in greater numbers than ever before, women who are talented and ambitious and don't plan to stop working if they have children, isn't it in the papers' best interest to take some steps, having invested in these women in the first place, to keep them? "Forty percent of our hires over the past couple of years have been women," says Arlene Morgan, deputy metro editor at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "Most of them are married. They are valuable and talented. You want to have them come back."

t's important to note first that maternity leave policies in general in this country are dismal. The United States is the only major industrialized nation that does not have some form of national, partially paid maternity-related benefits. Over 100 countries do, and nine European Community countries provide paid parental leave to both men and women (see sidebar, page 34). At home, almost all of the top American companies responding to a 1986 survey said they offered short-term paid disability benefits, usually six to eight weeks following a normal birth. But only 52 percent said they offered any additional unpaid maternity leave. In fact, more



I won't get to where I want to get,' says reporter
Melissa Dribben, 'but I'm not willing to compromise my kids'

may offer it, says Margaret Meiers, a senior associate at Catalyst, the research group that conducted the survey, but they may do so selectively. "If they like a woman and think she's a good employee, they'll give her a longer leave," says Meiers. "If they don't like her, they won't."

I found that little solid research has been done on maternity benefits at newspapers — and there is an urgent need for reliable studies — but it's safe to say that there is a wide range of paid and unpaid leaves. The New York Times, for example, offers a leave of up to six months, partially paid. So does The Sacramento Bee. The Austin, Texas, American-Statesman allows its employees to use whatever vacation and sick leave they have, but they are allowed to take only as much time as the doctor says they need.

In general, it seems that a few lucky reporters and editors may be able to take up to a year or more off, with some of that time paid, depending on seniority and how much vacation and sick leave they use, while others are expected to be back at their desks as soon as six weeks after they deliver. A pregnant reporter at one small daily who told her editors she would be taking her full six weeks says they acted surprised. "They said, 'You're not going to take all that, are you? We're pretty shorthanded."

At another small paper, this one in California, the publisher told me proudly

that her city editor had just come back from having a baby and was actually breast-feeding it on what she described as an "incredibly stressful" job. The editor was working nights and her husband was bringing the baby in to be nursed. This woman had been home for six weeks after the baby was born, the length of time she was allowed following delivery under the paper's official maternity leave policy, the publisher said. However, she added that employees could take a leave of absence beyond that of up to six months, depending on how long they felt they needed to be at home, their particular job, and the length of their service. In this way, she said, the leave could be tailored to both the new mother's and the paper's needs. (That sounds fine, but I wonder whether a less enlightened management might be tempted to use such discretionary leave to play favorites.)

How long is the ideal maternity leave? Six weeks may be time enough for a physical recovery, but there are other considerations. What about the emotional needs of the mother and the child? And how many babies are sleeping through the night at six weeks? The Sun Herald, a daily in Biloxi, Mississippi, with a weekday circulation of 49,000 and a newsroom staff of twenty-four reporters, offers its pregnant employees up to four months' leave, with at least part of that period paid. "We feel that's enough time to recuperate and be with

the newborn," says personnel director Toni Dutruch. "By then, you're adjusted and you're getting more sleep. Six weeks is not enough time to come back. You won't be happy or productive."

But six weeks is all that many journalists get. The woman who told me the following story was not complaining, although she had every reason to. She was doing her job the best she could, but I found the conditions she was working under this past winter shocking. She asked that her name not be used because she was afraid of losing her job, which is a combination of editing and reporting at a paper with a circulation of under 15,000.

I spoke to her when her baby was seven weeks old and she had been back to work one week. The first day back she worked ten hours; the second day, twelve hours. That week she worked six days. She said she was averaging three to five hours sleep a night. And with such long hours and such a small baby, she was having trouble finding child care. "The baby's only seven weeks old and I'm on the third babysitter," she said. In fact, the baby was sick the day I talked to her, and the child's grandmother, who lived nearby, had taken a day off from her job to take care of it.

This woman is divorced, has two children, and needs to work, and she certainly hasn't taken advantage of her situation. She has been at her present job seven years. "With my first baby, I worked till Friday and had her on Sat-

urday," she said. "The next time I worked till Friday and had the baby on Sunday." She said she felt under a lot of pressure. "You have to be here. I think I'm overcompensating. But I feel they're keeping watch. You have to show you can do it all."

hen I started researching this story I had no particular leads on women in stressful situations. I just started calling papers at random, asking for anyone with a new baby or small children. Especially at small papers, it was as though I had tapped a vein, and the stories just poured out. That may be some indication of how widespread these situations are. A reporter I spoke to at a small southern daily

Child care — and the care-less press

Although the growing participation of women in the work force has brought a big demand for employer-provided child care, the response so far has been very small. In the newspaper industry, it's been almost nil.

"There is a great disparity between newspapers and other industries, such as banking and health," says Dana Friedman, a senior research associate for the Work and Family Information Center of the Conference Board, a business research group in New York City.

As a result, child-care experts say, newspapers are not getting the most out of some of their employees. "If you're worrying about your children, then you're not concentrating on your job," says Dr. Sandra Burud, a partner at Summa Associates, a Los Angelesbased child-care-benefits planning firm.

According to The Newspaper Guild, which has been bargaining for child care since 1971, providing it for employees can reduce absenteeism and turnover, improve morale, and foster a more favorable image of the employer among employees.

Yet papers that can be persuaded to do something often take very small steps: perhaps setting up a tax-benefit plan that saves employees a few hundred dollars in taxes on their child-care costs or just doing a feasibility study. Anna Padia, human rights coordinator for the Guild, says that one paper did a study of its employees' child-care needs and decided it could meet them by providing new employees with a pamphlet on local resources.

Of the nation's ten largest newspapers, only three provide any child-care services and none directly contributes to the cost of child care. USA Today and The Washington Post, for example, have referral services, which, ideally, direct employees to suitable child-care resources in the area. The Post also has a "dependent care" plan (as does The Wall Street Journal). Under the Post's plan, employees can choose to have the amount of their annual child-care costs. up to \$5,000, taken out of their salaries automatically and set aside in a fund. That money, which is withdrawn by the employee as needed, is not taxed.

Judy Mann, a columnist for the *Post*, calls the newspaper's program, implemented last summer, "a breakthrough. There's been a significant change in management's attitude from five years ago, when the attitude was 'child care is your personal problem.' "But Mann says that, despite the growing awareness, on the whole "very little has changed. There is a huge gap between a referral service and making sure your employees have somewhere to put their kids."

Some newspapers that don't provide

child-care services say that the demand is not significant enough to warrant their doing so. "It's just not a capital 'I' issue," Leonard Harris, who was then director of corporate relations for The New York Times Company, said in an interview last summer.

But some child-care experts say employers don't see child care as a necessity because employees may not be voicing their needs. Lack of communication is one cause of the problem, says Dr. Burud of Summa Associates. Fear of reprisal is another: "Employees are generally very quiet. They think that, if they complain, this information will be used against them." Management may see the workers who complain as "troublemakers or irresponsible parents or more bother than they're worth."

ome journalists say there is a generation gap between upper management and employees in the newsroom that can influence a paper's response. "I have low expectations of management," says an editor at the Los Angeles Times, who asked to remain anonymous. "Most of the people who make the decisions have conventional marriages, with their wives caring for the kids, and it's difficult for them to realize how important an issue it is."

But the picture is not completely bleak. A few newspapers are taking sigresumed her job full-time only five weeks after her baby was born, covering a beat that takes in three rural counties and requires her to be on the road at least two days a week, six to eight hours at a time. She works at home with a computer and says she's been able to arrange her schedule so that she is not exhausted and can spend time with her baby.

As the first woman in her newsroom to become pregnant, this reporter says she felt under great pressure to set a precedent that showed she could handle it. She fought while she was still pregnant to keep her beat instead of being reassigned to a desk job, not only because she liked it but also because it gave her some degree of autonomy and a sense of control in her personal and profes-

sional life. "I was showing that my mind didn't go dead, that I wasn't putting up wallpaper instead of working, that I was responsible."

She says the biggest obstacle she was up against was "this macho attitude, that to be a good reporter everything must be second; husband and family are negligible. When you bring a child into that atmosphere you feel like a real freak. I tried so hard to make arrangements so that I would not be seen as performing poorly, so they couldn't say, "See, if you get pregnant, you can't perform."

However, when the next reporter became pregnant last year the editor instituted a new policy that all pregnant women would be brought into in-city assignments, to minimize the paper's liahardbitten Hello-sweetheart-get-me-rewrite image, the notion that the news waits for no one and a reporter must be ready to go anywhere anytime in search of a story? "In that case," says Anna Padia, human rights coordinator for The Newspaper Guild, "don't take a vacation or get sick. In fact, why not move into the damned plant? Just give up your whole life and live for the profession twenty-four hours a day. There's a mythology that's been inculcated over the years into our minds and bloodstreams that we're different. But journalists are

bility. That second reporter was given a

life-style assignment. "She had been

covering government, politics, and

crime," says her co-worker. "Now, one

of her jobs is working on wedding sto-

What about that macho attitude, that

ries."

However, that line of thinking still prevails, Padia adds, and therefore the interruptions of pregnancy penalize women just for being female. "It's a terrible conflict," she says.

human beings: fathers and mothers, churchgoers and PTA members. Fire-

fighters, engineers, teachers, and doc-

tors don't give up those rights. We don't

owe our souls to the company store."

Just how terrible a conflict is illustrated by the story of another woman who asked that I not use her name, even though she no longer works in journalism. She left her paper two years ago, but she still can't talk about her experience without crying. She was city editor when she took her first three-month maternity leave, "some vacation and the rest unpaid," in 1981. She was livingsection editor when she became pregnant again, and it was then she learned that a 1978 federal law entitled her to include her accumulated sick leave, which amounted to several weeks, in her maternity leave. But she says when she asked management about it and then her union representative, she was told she couldn't. She says the union steward told her, "That's not what sick leaves are for." She called a lawyer, and the paper then agreed to let her take it. But she believes she paid a price for asserting herself.

When she was about to come back from the second leave, she says she was told her day editing job was no longer open and she would have to work nights.

nificant steps, and these may serve as models for others down the road. *The Seattle Times* is completing a \$100,000 renovation of a nearby building that it owns, transforming it into a child-care center that will open this spring. According to Tom Bryan, the *Times*'s personnel manager, employees will receive a discount of about \$100 a month, and an additional subsidy is planned for those who can't afford the reduced

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution came up with a less expensive solution when the papers entered a consortium with four other companies in 1985. The five companies formed the nonprofit Downtown Child Development Center, which reserves twenty spaces for parents at the paper. Joan Hall, personnel director at the Journal-Constitution, says interest among employees wasn't strong enough to warrant an investment in onsite child care. But entering the consortium met the level of need and reduced the cost to the paper.

Anna Padia of The Newspaper Guild says that over the years the Guild has changed its approach in bargaining for child-care services; instead of seeking an on-site or nearby center, it tries to get employers to subsidize employees' child-care costs. Both approaches have been largely unsuccessful. The Guild has had better luck with partial solutions

such as tax-benefit plans, flexible hours and extended leaves, and job-sharing programs. While some Guild members see these gains as "tiny things" used by employers to appease workers without spending money, Padia says they are at least a foot in the door.

The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky, pays the rent for a child-care center it formed in 1985. The nonprofit center, called Children's Edition, is open to the public but gives Courier-Journal employees priority and a \$50 monthly discount. Children's Edition is located a half-block from the newspaper and accepts children aged six weeks to six years. Forty-five of the eighty spaces at the center are currently filled by the children of the paper's employees.

Hunt Helm and his wife, Kay Stewart, reporters for *The Courier-Journal*, have enrolled their son at the center. They pay \$60 a week for his care. "At other newspapers," says Helm, "there's a huge demand for day care and it's not being met. It's good to know that I work for a company that provides a child-care service. It has removed a lot of potential worry, it definitely helps morale, and I feel better about the paper."

BRENDAN COONEY

Brendan Cooney, a former intern at the Review, is a student at Beloit College in Wisconsin.



of the time,' says reporter Janet Davey, 'two hours before a night meeting, I'm having a heart attack, scrambling at the last minute to find a sitter'

She was surprised, she says, because "there had been no criticism of my work performance before that." Relying on a state law that guarantees women returning from maternity leave the same or a similar job, she again sought outside legal help and was given her old job, with a written agreement guaranteeing her daytime employment for one year. When the year was up, she was again offered nights and weekends, hours she says management knew she couldn't work because her husband is out of town a lot. She chose to quit.

"I had to choose between my family and work, and that's when my career ended after six years," she says. "I'm really bitter and hurt by it. Despite the attitude there, I loved the work." Because there is no other newspaper in her city, she feels shut out of her profession, and she misses it. "I've allowed myself to dream that, if the management at the paper changed, I'd approach them again."

Child care is another area where new parents do not get much help from their papers, although a small but growing number of businesses of all kinds are realizing that such help can pay off in lower absenteeism and better morale (see sidebar, page 36). While finding good, reliable child care is always a

problem, it can be particularly hard for reporters and editors who work unpredictable hours. Janet Davey is one of only two reporters at The Daily Herald in Columbia, Tennessee (circulation 13,000), and she covers a lot of meetings in the afternoons and sometimes at night. One of her two young children goes to a day-care center, which closes at 5:30 P.M. "Most of the time, two hours before a night meeting I'm having a heart attack," she says, "scrambling at the last minute to find a sitter. My husband is unreliable; he doesn't like to do it." If she is out sick, she gets paid, but if her children are sick and she misses work, she doesn't. "Sometimes, if they're sick, I'll get someone to watch them in the morning until eight. Then I'll try to get in the office at six-thirty or seven A.M. to work for an hour or so. I can get a lot done then."

n 1979, 34 percent of women with children under the age of one were in the workforce. By 1986, that figure had jumped to 52 percent. There are some signs that both society and the workplace are coming to terms with those numbers, although at a pace that makes a snail look like a jogger. A bill now before Congress would create a national family-leave policy, giving new

parents up to ten weeks of unpaid leave in all companies with fifty or more employees. That's not much help to people who can't afford to go without a paycheck for that long, but at least it's a beginning. There is also comprehensive child-care legislation under consideration on the Hill, including a bill introduced by none other than archconservative Senator Orrin Hatch.

In the workplace women and a handful of men have begun to push in the last few years for arrangements that give them more time with their families job-sharing, flexible hours, four-day work weeks, working from home - and some of this is beginning to be done at newspapers. At The Record in Hackensack, New Jersey, four reporters, all women, share two full-time jobs, one in the business department and one in general news. The Daily Inter Lake, a small paper in Kalispell, Montana, has a husband-and-wife team sharing a reporting job. And the Post-Dispatch in St. Louis has William and Margaret Freivogel, who jointly share the title of assistant Washington bureau chief. Whoever is not working at the office is at home with the couple's four children. They have been sharing a job since 1980, when they approached the paper with the idea, thinking it wouldn't go anywhere. But management, says Bill Freivogel, "immediately saw the potential of a good deal for the company." In essence, the Post-Dispatch got two good reporters for the price of one.

There are all kinds of good deals waiting to be worked out. Newspapers have more flexible hours than nine-to-five companies and the computer technology to allow some reporters to work from home. Given the range of jobs in the newsroom, there's also plenty of opportunity for new parents and their editors to sit down and work out a schedule or a job definition that fits the needs of both. Judith Havemann was deputy national editor at The Washington Post when she left to have twins. When she came back, the paper created a new reporting beat for her, covering the Office of Management and Budget and another federal agency, which suited her time needs better. At the Detroit Free Press. Karen Schneider, a political reporter and editor returning from a leave, asked to work one weekend day as part of her

five-day week, so she would only have to have a sitter four days. The paper obliged. "Newspapers have a golden opportunity to be leaders in policies for parents," she says. "And that kind of consideration will pay off in terms of loyalty and dedication."

Some people believe the next few years will see big changes in newsrooms as the next generation of managers takes over, men and especially women who are more attuned to the needs of working parents.

But Jean Gaddy Wilson, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri who has done extensive research on women in media, is not so sure things will change soon. "Only thirteen percent of the directing editors in the country" — those who make news decisions — "are women," she says. "And that is changing at the rate of less than one percent a year. At that rate, when women achieve parity in editorships with their membership in the population, it will be the year 2055."

ust having women in top management is no guarantee that newsroom policies will change, Wilson says. "I've sat in on seminars with a lot of top women who have gotten there without having children. When the conversation turns to day care or maternity leave, they don't want to hear about it. They want to change the subject, to talk about something 'that really matters.' The news business is predominantly a male structure, and those who have made it within a male structure have those values. The feminist writer Shulamith Firestone said we will only have equal access [to power] when we stop bearing children."

But women are not going to stop having children, even though some, perhaps many, women in the news business up to now have sacrificed their personal lives for successful careers. The top women at many newspapers today are single or childless; can the same be said of the top men? The women I spoke to who are having children and returning to work see no reason why they can't have what men have had all along — both a family and a fulfilling job. The women, however, are still the ones bearing the brunt of making that radical change. In an ideal world, it seems to

me, fathers would assume an equal risk to their careers.

A handful of male journalists have taken time off from their papers to be with their babies, and a few, like Bill Freivogel at the *Post-Dispatch*, have actually slowed down their careers to play a bigger part in family life. "Most men I talk to will say, 'That's terrific, but are you getting as much as you want to out of work?" Freivogel says. "The women will say, 'Gee, I'd like to do something like that."

But few men in any field take more than a few days off when they become fathers, even when their companies offer official paternity leaves. In fact, the leave policy may be only window-dressing, not meant for those on their way up. "If you think there's resistance to women taking time off," says a lawyer who works on parental-leave issues, "the resistance to men who take time off is extraordinary. Men have been told, 'If you do that, you'll never get promoted.' Some are belittled and humiliated."

I worked with a reporter once who sat

at his desk and pined for his newborn son, who came in late and often slipped out early to be with him. But it seems that most new fathers, for one reason or another, bypass the job stresses and career conflicts that new mothers face. "I think it's just easier for men," says Karen Schneider at the Detroit Free Press. Her husband is the paper's television critic. He travels a lot and misses the children, she says, but he seems to take this in stride. "Men just plow ahead. They have no experience of radically modifying their lives for children." I spoke to a woman at another newspaper who had been a reporter before her baby was born, but was now on the copy desk so she could work parttime. Her husband, meanwhile, had been promoted to assistant managing editor at the same paper. She didn't sound upset. In fact, she said she was having too much fun with her child to worry about her career.

But I wonder if, in darker moments, she doesn't resent it. Maybe a little? Maybe a lot.



Trying to make Atlanta's papers 'world-class'

A look at Bill Kovach's first, turbulent year at the once-great Journal-Constitution

by BILL CUTLER

hen word reached the newsroom at The Atlanta Journal and Constitution in October 1986 that The New York Times's Washington bureau chief, Bill Kovach, was being offered the editorship of Cox Enterprises' Atlanta newspaper properties, groups of reporters fired off telegrams to Kovach begging him to accept the job. Others expressed their joy by palm-slapping displays of high fives. The rhetoric of euphoria escalated. At last, the pride of the sixteen-paper Cox chain had found a worthy successor to the Constitution's legendary Ralph McGill. The new catchword for the Atlanta papers: "worldclass."

For his top lieutenants, Kovach hired two other Times men - Wendell "Sonny" Rawls to head the newsroom and Dudley Clendinen to oversee features. Although all three are southerners by birth, they have been dubbed sometimes jocularly, sometimes with fear and trembling - the "New York mafia." The new team made changes affecting five popular local columnists, some of whom were moved from their accustomed prominent spots in the Constitution. These changes resulted in two acrimonious resignations and a firing. Prophets of doom cried out that the papers were losing their special regional flavor. And when the papers bungled the first big local investigative story to break under the new regime - allegations of cocaine use by Julian Bond, Mayor Andrew Young, and other prominent black leaders - critics nodded sagely and said, "What else could you expect from a bunch of outsiders?"

Kovach's difficulties in settling into Atlanta continued to intrigue local media watchers throughout his first year. Last

November several publications reported a major flap involving the Journal-Constitution's relations with the Cox Washington bureau. Kovach himself denies having experienced a rocky year, but outside observers see the turmoil as evidence of the awesome force of inertia in the newspaper industry. Noting the thinness of writing talent at the papers, the result of decades of low morale and good reporters being lured away to other cities, John Fleming, a former senior editor of the Journal-Constitution's Sunday magazine, says, "Trying to turn around a newspaper is like trying to turn around a locomotive. It takes five years." Commenting on the papers' coverage of his alleged cocaine use, Julian Bond echoes Fleming: "They're like an ocean liner which can't just stop and go in another direction. It's hard to overcome a hundred years of history."

The "history" Bond refers to is the Constitution's troubled relationship with the city's black community. "This paper is the one that incited the [1906] race riot here," Bond recalls. Yet, before and after that episode, the Constitution was led by distinguished editors associated with racial moderation: Henry Grady. apostle of a "New South" near the end of the nineteenth century, and outspoken antisegregationist Ralph McGill during the 1950s and '60s. Even during Mc-Gill's tenure, however, Cox management's commitment to full coverage of the integration story in the South was half-hearted at best, and in the twenty years following McGill's death the Atlanta papers oscillated between overly harsh criticism of local black leaders and overly scrupulous reluctance to find fault with them (see sidebar, page 44).

The Minter era

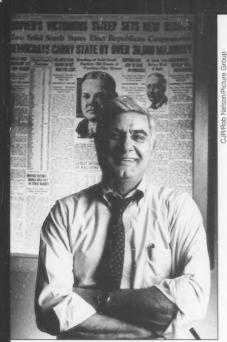
Bill Kovach's arrival at the end of 1986 was heralded as salvation for the news-

room in part because many Atlanta reporters considered his predecessor as editor, Jim Minter, far too respectful of local authorities and institutions. Minter, a painfully shy, soft-spoken Georgian, had been put in charge of news operations for the Journal-Constitution in 1980. Two years later, Cox management brought into Atlanta from their Dayton, Ohio, operation David Easterly, soon to become president of the Atlanta papers. He took a number of steps to improve the Atlanta papers' relations with the city's majority black population. Minter says that Easterly's arrival brought "a change in the way we handled race. We became much more careful in our coverage of black politicians. In part, that can be traced to my views of not having reckless coverage in any area. You've got to be tough, but very careful."

Newsroom morale was adversely affected by the perception that powerful black politicians and businessmen could manipulate management to kill or weaken negative stories. City hall reporter John Lancaster, who left the Atlanta papers for a job with The Washington Post two weeks before the announcement of Kovach's appointment, had amassed a "totally documented" report showing that a minority contracting firm headed by city council president Marvin Arrington was a front for a white-owned company. Minter later acknowledged to Lancaster that the story had been killed after Arrington and the presidents of several black colleges had brought pressure to bear on him. It ran two months later, only after a radio station broke the news. Says Lancaster, "Minter called me into his office and apologized. He genuinely felt bad about it and said he had never been more embarrassed by a decision."

Lancaster views the newsroom morale problem under Minter as pervasive:

Bill Cutler is a free-lance writer who lives in Atlanta.



Entry problems: First, Kovach (above) tangled with popular columnists. Then along came a tricky drug story.

"Reporters often felt they were at war — no, that's too strong — at odds with management. There was an underlying feeling that if reporters were enthusiastic about an investigative story, that [enthusiasm] wouldn't be shared by management. Minter set the tone."

Even Minter's harshest critics, like staff writer Ron Taylor, give him credit for understanding the Atlanta market, what the public wants and thinks. Minter was so attuned to a certain kind of southern reader, Taylor says, that "he was almost antipress himself." Such a perspective was interpreted in the newsroom as evidence that reporters should back off from controversy, especially when it might embroil individuals or interests the editor and his bosses favored.

Two stories the Atlanta papers did not pursue vigorously resulted in Pulitzer Prizes for smaller Georgia papers during the mid-1980s. A Savannah weekly, *The Georgia Gazette* (now defunct), won a Pulitzer for its editorials about, among other things, massive charges of corruption against the state's labor commissioner, Sam Caldwell. Minter insists that the Atlanta papers had covered the case exhaustively ten years earlier, but reporter Ron Taylor claims that "Caldwell was another authority figure Minter thought was being abused by the evil

press: 'This isn't that big a deal. Let's not fan the flames when there's nothing here.' ''

In 1985 the Knight-Ridder papers in Macon won a Pulitzer for their coverage of academics and athletes, including stories about the preferential treatment in remedial courses that was given to athletes at the University of Georgia. Minter, a former crack sportswriter himself, says, "I was at fault for not being incensed. I thought nobedy wants to fix the [preferential-treatment] system, and it was so common that it wasn't news to me. Obviously, I was wrong."

Minter's cautious approach to newspapering determined his handling of the biggest local story of the 1980s, the case known as "Atlanta's Missing and Murdered Children." Before the trial of suspect Wayne Williams began, Journal reporter David B. Hilder had painstakingly assembled a story documenting the prosecution's full case against the man later convicted of two of the murders. In an internal memo to Minter dated November 5, 1981, Journal managing editor Eddie Sears argued, "It is irresponsible not to print. Hilder's piece clears up many questions about the case and puts to rest some nagging community fears. It shows, once and for all, that police have not simply grabbed the first available black man and made him a scapegoat for the murders." Minter was not persuaded, however, and held the story until the trial was over. He says now of the controversy, "My position was that we were not equipped to be the police force on that story and would not try to investigate on our own."

nother big story whose handling caused a morale problem in the newsroom involved revelations about ticket-fixing by the Georgia State Patrol under commander Hugh Hardison. Minter was skeptical of the charges, believing that Hardison was being unfairly targeted by political adversaries. Thus, while newsroom reporters were trying to document the charges, Minter authorized a two-member reporting team to conduct a separate investigation into the matter from an office outside the newspaper building and to submit their copy directly to him or his chosen subordinates, bypassing both city editor Brenda Mooney and assistant managing

editor for local news Jim Wooten. In the view of former features writer Rob Levin, "When you don't support the a.m.e. and the city editor, you're running a shameful shop."

Minter blames himself for the ensuing morale problem: "The friction in the newsroom didn't speak well of my management. Ticket-fixing had gone on forever, and I thought the people in the newsroom were young and without the background to understand the political angle to it. I was not exactly immune to making mistakes from time to time. I would do it differently now."

Another mistake Minter regrets is his papers' failure to ride herd on the runaway costs of Plant Vogtle, Georgia Power's nuclear power plant. A reporter familiar with coverage of the public utility characterizes the old regime's general attitude as "anti-consumer, pro-business." Although stories critical of the Georgia Power Company were allowed into the paper, he says, they tended to get buried in the business section, whose reporters were so burdened with assignments that they could not devote the necessary time and energy to understanding all the factors accounting for Plant Vogtle's cost overruns.

Under Minter, the Atlanta papers overall gave the appearance of being "asleep," in the view of former senior editor John Fleming, now managing editor of *Georgia Trend* magazine. Despite an infusion of capital and new ideas under Easterly and despite occasional brilliant reporting and writing, the Atlanta dailies appeared doomed to seeing their best talent move on to papers with reputations for more aggressive reporting.

Against this backdrop of low newsroom morale and a feeling that the papers were drifting, Easterly suggested to Minter late in 1985 that outside consultants be brought in to evaluate the operation. One of those hired was David Burgin, former editor of the San Francisco Examiner, now editor of the Dallas Times Herald, who says he found "pretty sad stuff. It was one of the most unhappy papers I've been in. There was an enormous amount of talent available, but the paper kept doing dumb things. Why do they have a section called 'Dixie Living'? What does that say to black people? Picking up the paper was like walking into a messy living room. The



Easy does it:
Under Kovach's predecessor,
Jim Minter (left), an overly cautious approach to local stories — especially those involving powerful people and institutions — created severe morale problems.

front page looked like a combination of a beach ball and a Hawaiian shirt."

The other consultant Minter hired, former editor of *The Boston Globe* Tom Winship, focused on the Atlanta papers' news and editorial coverage. He recommended reducing the number of regular columnists and greatly increasing the size of the newshole. Winship was not alone in being troubled by the balance between analysis and breaking news. A respected political writer for the *Journal-Constitution* says, "There was too much personality journalism, and the political staff atrophied."

It was Winship who put Cox management in touch with Bill Kovach. Says Winship, "Clearly, it was love at first sight."

Enter Kovach, exeunt columnists

Beneath a full head of white hair, Bill Kovach's bushy dark eyebrows are the focal point of his broad, genial face. He elongates his vowels in a classic Appalachian drawl. One corner of his otherwise antiseptically functional office on the sixth floor of the Journal-Constitution building in downtown Atlanta is devoted to a hundred years of the papers' history. The wooden rolltop desk used by Henry Grady and Ralph McGill sits against a wall, beneath photographs of these two Constitution editors and of southern folklorist Joel Chandler Harris, popularizer of the "Uncle Remus" stories and the Constitution's associate editor at the turn of the century.

Kovach (pronounced KAH-vitch), the fifty-four-year-old son of Albanian immigrants who settled in eastern Tennes-

see, takes his southern history seriously. He grew up reading the *Journal-Constitution* on Sundays, and when the offer came from Cox to edit the region's leading papers (recent Sunday circulation 662,000), "It was not anything I had to think about a lot." Most important, the job in Atlanta gave Kovach the "real opportunity to come back south and contribute. I always regretted the notion that I had to go north to do what I wanted to do."

"World-class" is Kovach's term for describing the type of newspaper he intends to run - "a paper that reacts immediately to major stories and recognizes the stories when they're there . . . a paper that is looked to by everybody in the city and metro area and the state and the region as the source of information that's going to tell them what's happening that's going to affect their lives every day." One change he was determined to make immediately was to put a stop to the practice of allowing the papers' political columnists to break news: "That just was counter to my notion about how a newspaper should be run." Implementing that policy created the biggest single flap of Kovach's first year as editor.

The Constitution's two chief political columnists, Bill Shipp and Frederick Allen, had generated more than their share of controversy under the old regime. Shipp was resented by some, in reporter Ron Taylor's words, as "the person Minter counted on to report what was going on in the world." Editors and newsmen saw Shipp as exercising an undue influence on the way stories like the

State Patrol investigation and the unfolding scandal in athletics at the University of Georgia were covered. Rick Allen, for his part, commanded considerable respect from reporters, though many saw him as a prima donna with a monstrous ego. Allen says his view that the "special treatment I give to things, the story within the story," deserved a "little bit bigger" by-line than other writers "struck [Kovach and newsroom head Wendell Rawls] as egotistical."

Allen and Shipp both accuse the Kovach team of making commitments, and then failing to follow through on them. Shipp says, "That was a management style I had never encountered and hope never to see again." Shipp handed in his resignation last May. He is now editing a newsletter on Georgia politics and writing regularly for several local publications. Kovach, who regrets losing Shipp, admits he was "insensitive" to the columnist's frustration.

Allen, meanwhile, was trying to interpret the "mixed signals" beamed in his direction. "The message I got was that they didn't like my work," he says. "They thought I was too big, that I had a following that swamped the paper. I volunteered to move my column to the op-ed page, where it would be marked opinion. Kovach said, 'Fine,' then didn't do anything about it."

The 'New York mafia' and the big Atlanta drug story

Allen's frustration with Kovach's management, plus clashes with the blunttalking assistant managing editor, "Sonny" Rawls, provided the context for the climactic episode that led directly to Allen's resignation. The new team had been in place barely four months early last April when the story of Julian Bond's alleged cocaine use surfaced. As leaked by an Atlanta police officer to local TV stations, the report was sensational: on March 19, Bond's estranged wife, Alice, had gone to the police and accused a number of prominent Atlantans, including Mayor Andrew Young, of snorting cocaine. Here was a situation tailor-made to prove that the big boys from the Times were not going to coddle powerful black leaders, as the old regime had been accused of doing. Kovach and Rawls assigned more than a dozen reporters to the story.

On May 11 a front-page story headlined ALLEGATION OF DRUG USE HANGS OVER YOUNG'S HEAD referred to Alice Bond's "tenuous" linkage of the mayor to cocaine use, but quoted from a confidential police memorandum summarizing her March 19 statement: "Ms. Bond claims to have seen Mayor Andrew Young using cocaine." Shortly thereafter, however, columnist Allen received a tip that the memo itself was suspect, the product of a police officer with his own political agenda aimed at discrediting black elected officials. In its passages dealing with the mayor, Allen was told, the memo distorted Alice Bond's words and sentiments.

Allen, who had acceded to the new editors' directive against using his column to break news, took the tip to Rawls and suggested that the newsroom follow up on it. "They thought I was getting all this from [former Attorney General] Griffin Bell, who represented Andy [Young]," Allen says. "They thought I was being spoon-fed. I didn't use Bell as a source. Mine were better, rocksolid. I told Sonny who they were." In retrospect, Allen says, "I probably could have been more selfless and told my sources the only way to get the story in was to talk to our reporters. But I still have a few competitive juices in me. I gave them my sources, and they had a week to work on it and couldn't turn it" - i.e., get confirmation that the memo was inaccurate.

t that point, Allen called the newsroom's bluff. He wrote a column that began, "By far the oddest aspect of Atlanta's cocaine scandal has been Alice Bond's vague accusation that Mayor Andrew Young is a user." The column went on to quote from the actual tapes of Alice Bond's interview with the police and concluded, "What we have, in short, is an accusation so shaky that it lacks credibility." The mayor, Allen wrote, "ought to be presumed entirely innocent of any use of cocaine."

The column never appeared in the Constitution. On June 9, Allen resigned, citing "a disagreement with some of the editors." On the same day, the local CBS affiliate, WAGA-TV, which had broken the story initially back in April, ran transcripts of the police tape reveal-

ing that Allen's information had been correct. "It was very embarrassing for [the newspaper]," Allen comments. "They kept Rick Allen from scooping the newsroom and let Channel 5 do it." Allen is now a political reporter and commentator for Cable News Network.

Kovach says in rebuttal, "Allen knows the reason we didn't run his column was that we only had an excerpt [from the Alice Bond interview]. We were involved in litigation to get the whole thing and I preferred to wait until then." The explanation seems odd, since the papers had earlier been willing to publish allegations contained in a two-page police memo summarizing the entire conversation.

On June 11, the *Constitution* ran extended excerpts from the Alice Bond interview, including the comment, "Well, don't know anything about Andy... I never seen Andy." Yet six days later a front-page *Journal* article stated, "During a taped conversation March 19, Mrs. Bond told Atlanta narcotics officers that... prominent Atlantans — including Mayor Young and Walter Young, the mayor's brother" used cocaine.

The Atlanta papers' coverage of Mayor Young as a drug user damaged the credibility of Koyach's regime. Veteran staff writer Jim Auchmutey, who admires Kovach and Rawls in general, says of the Journal-Constitution's handling of the story, "A lot of people thought we got caught with our dicks hanging out." Former editor Jim Minter faults the papers for lack of caution in assessing the source of the anti-Young information: "You have to follow your instincts. If you've been around at all, you know that Andy Young, ninety-nine to one, is not taking cocaine. I go with those odds. Always, always be cautious of what some policeman says." Reporter Ron Taylor comments, "Minter's attitude was that you had to have a smoking gun before you went after officials. He had this respect for institutions. The new guys coming in have the philosophy, All the news is fit to print; nothing is sacred, everything suspect. It's the flip side of the Minter view. I like the new guys, but people express the view, 'Isn't there anything they wouldn't run?" "

Dr. Charles King, who conducts seminars on racial sensitivity for the Atlanta papers, met with Kovach and Cox offi-

cials to discuss the coverage, which he calls "disastrous." In a press conference the day after the transcripts of Alice Bond's statement were published, Mayor Young accused the news media of "sensationalizing" the story and said, "The newspapers broke down." Julian Bond attributes the coverage to "incompetence and ambition coming together." Bond sees the exhaustive investigation into his personal affairs as just the latest chapter in the Atlanta papers' twentyyear vendetta against him, going back to their red-baiting of his stand against the Vietnam War in the mid-1960s. As head of the local chapter of the NAACP in the mid-1970s, Bond was a principal figure in a partially successful petition to the Federal Communications Commis-



Unbroken story: Columnist Frederick Allen had news for the newsroom but it didn't get printed, and he resigned.

sion to force the Cox interests to break up their monopoly control of the Atlanta media. (The local Cox cable company was divested as a consequence of that action.)

For his part, Kovach says, "I have less question with our handling [of the Bond-Young affair] than with most stories we cover." He insists his organization took the high road by focusing on how the Atlanta police handled the investigation rather than on "the gossip element," the personalities allegedly involved in cocaine abuse.

Rick Allen's dramatic resignation did not end the turmoil at the Atlanta papers. In early August, life-style columnist Ron Hudspeth was fired for producing a newsletter that editors said competed with the *Journal-Constitution*, whereupon immensely successful syndicated columnist Lewis Grizzard announced his resignation. Cox management is widely reported to have put pressure on Kovach to take whatever steps were required to keep Grizzard. The humorist, a spokesman for good-ole-boy southern values and traditions, has stayed on, while occasionally mocking Kovach's "world-class" aims, as he did in an interview with the Los Angeles Times.

Last November, Kovach and his crew were back in the news. Several local publications reported that Cox management tried to fire newsroom head Sonny Rawls following attempts by Kovach and Rawls to "take over" the Cox Washington bureau. Kovach, the stories continued, threatened to resign if Rawls were let go.

Kovach labels all such stories "absurd." He acknowledges putting heavy pressure on Cox's Washington bureau to cover breaking stories "more aggressively" and getting complaints back from bureau chief Andrew Glass that such demands were unreasonable. Kovach says, "But that's the way it's supposed to work. If you don't push things, nothing happens." And what about Rawls's job being in jeopardy? "There was some disagreement, yeah, sure," he says, but Kovach insists that this was simply "constructive tension," not a power struggle. As for his own role in interceding for Rawls, he says, "I don't

threaten to resign. I'm not Alexander Haig."

Kovach's year: a progress report

Kovach expresses weariness at the attention the media have been paying to his every move and gesture. "I guess that's what comes of being the only game in town," he says. Cox's monopoly position in the Atlanta market, however, has been less secure since The New York Times Company purchased a tiny suburban paper, the *Gwinnett Daily News*. Last fall the Times took the competition to the *Journal-Constitution*'s doorstep by placing boxes on street corners in downtown Atlanta.

In taking on the Cox giant in metropolitan Atlanta, the Times will have its work cut out for it. Under Kovach's leadership, the Journal-Constitution has greatly expanded its suburban coverage. and this, in turn, has brought a higher circulation growth rate in Gwinnett County. Even Kovach's strongest detractors acknowledge improvements in overall news coverage and in the appearance of the papers. The newshole is larger by some 15 percent, thanks to a significant budgetary increase for the news operation. Abandonment of Minter's old policy of having no more than two front-page jumps gives prominence to more stories, and a new picture-laden digest of the paper's contents on page 2A makes it easier to locate stories in all sections.

New offset presses have brought dramatic improvement in the use of color on the front page. Bold capital letters headline the continuation of important stories on inside pages, while banner front-page heads occasionally are given unprecedented prominence. On the day Cuban prisoners signed an agreement with federal authorities at the Atlanta penitentiary, the headline SIEGE ENDS featured letters two and a half inches high.

Under Dudley Clendinen, the features section has shown some improvement, especially in recognizing the achievements and concerns of previously ignored segments of the local population, such as the growing Asian and Hispanic communities. The everyday activities of Atlanta's large and powerful black middle class are now somewhat better represented. Writers have been trying — so far, with limited success — to discover and report on cultural events going on outside the mainstream arts organizations.

Under Kovach, the Atlanta papers have begun commissioning their own Roper public opinion polls instead of running prominent stories about polls conducted by a local TV station, as in the past. Last fall, the *Journal-Constitution* polls of southerners on the polit-

Georgia power — and the politics of race

For much of Ralph McGill's tenure as publisher of the Constitution, his closest ally was its editor, Eugene Patterson, whose columns won the Atlanta newspapers' last Pulitzer Prize, in 1967. Patterson resigned his position over a celebrated incident in September 1968 that brought to the surface the tensions always latent between business interests and journalistic independence in Atlanta. The papers' president, Jack Tarver, had given the newsroom the impression that he did not want staff coverage of the historic Selma march, but the last straw for Patterson was Tarver's denunciation of him for running a column by B. J. Phillips criticizing the Georgia Power Company's request for a rate increase. Five months later, McGill died. The Cox papers in Atlanta entered a long period of obscurity - often perceived to be synonymous with mediocrity.

Georgia Power was only one of the insti-

tutions and interests the Atlanta papers were thought — by outside observers and news-room personnel alike — to be overly concerned about protecting. In the early '70s, large-scale street demonstrations by civil-rights picketers protesting the hiring practices of Rich's department store, the Atlanta newspapers' largest advertiser, were buried in tiny stories in the C section. Rich's ads continued to dominate section fronts until 1978, long a ter other major papers had abandoned comparable ad placements.

During the '70s, Atlanta's political climate underwent a major change. The biracial coalition that had worked so smoothly while white folks held the power broke apart with the election of Maynard Jackson, the city's first black mayor, in 1973. Jackson's abrasive rhetoric in dealing with entrenched business interests was matched by the Atlanta papers' editorial choler directed at the may-

or's efforts to promote minority contractors. To many in the black community it appeared that the *Journal* and *Constitution* were engaged in unremitting sniper attacks on their leader and, by extension, on them.

The election of Andrew Young as mayor in 1981 caused a dramatic lowering of the emotional thermometer. Young made immediate efforts to conciliate the downtown power structure, including the Atlanta papers, by meeting with business leaders to discuss his administration's priorities. The Journal-Constitution responded by supporting the mayor editorially on major controversial in-town development issues. But the papers now found themselves under fire from another angle: black and white neighborhood activists who had supported Young for mayor felt betrayed by his siding with developers and attacked the newspapers for uncritically endorsing Young's views.

ical candidates and on attitudes toward Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork turned the papers themselves into national newsmakers. In another big-time public-relations move, the Atlanta dailies are sponsoring a series of presidential debates prior to the South's "Super Tuesday" primary date. Locally, too, the papers have taken on a new image as vigorous defenders of the public's right to information by bringing lawsuits against governmental agencies perceived to be violating the state's sunshine laws.

Even the paper's controversial handling of the Bond-Young affair has brought praise from some quarters. Says reporter Jim Galloway, "We scared a lot of people in government who hadn't seen that side of us in a long, long time." A black reporter assigned to cover the story, city hall bureau chief Nathan McCall, credits Kovach with unusual racial sensitivity in allowing black reporters as a group to air their feelings right after the explosive issue surfaced. Says McCall, "This would never have happened before - well, Minter might have done it because he started to have a dialogue about race issues in the newsroom, but it's unlikely it would've happened so soon. Kovach was aware of the larger issues from the start. He was under pressure from people saying that Minter could have been persuaded to back off. Kovach wanted to make sure he didn't give the impression of backing off, but he knew a lot was at stake here: political and civil-rights careers built up over decades. He was very concerned we could do damage that couldn't be undone."

cCall is one of several reporters who have observed a change in the demeanor and comportment of newsroom head Sonny Rawls since the early months in his firstever management job. Rawls, who is forty-six, shared a Pulitzer while working at The Philadelphia Inquirer and went on to become the head of The New York Times's Atlanta bureau. "When he first came," McCall says, "he was a reporter in a management position, not as diplomatic as he is now. His gruffness caused problems along sex as well as racial lines. He's a macho type who didn't think female reporters were hardbitten. The assignments he gave black



Looking up: Says reporter Nathan McCall, "It's becoming a decent place to work."

reporters seemed like carryovers from the previous regime. He didn't seem to have the same confidence in black reporters that he had in white. Since then, I know he's gotten wind of problems, and he's done an about-face.''

As a result, McCall is increasingly happy with his job at the *Journal-Constitution*. "For a change," he says, "people are beginning to think they want to work here. Black reporters needed to know if they were wanted for their skills or as a number. For years I've been telling black reporters to come at your own risk. Now that's changed. Hey, look, I'm considering my future here. It's becoming a decent place to work."

In general, newsroom morale has greatly improved under the Kovach regime. Reporters point with pride to the papers' new environmental beat, a perceived "pro-consumer" orientation, and, especially, a more critical approach to Georgia Power. Recent exhaustive coverage of the electric utility's request for a rate increase to cover the \$10 billion cost of constructing Plant Vogtle suggests to the newsroom that the sacredest of the sacred cows may no longer safely graze.

On the whole, though, the news emphasis seems not to have gone toward city investigative reporting, but toward more — and more thorough — international and national coverage, especially of the upcoming political campaigns. With the Democratic convention scheduled for Atlanta in July, Kovach's pressing priority has been to school a team of reporters "to cover the convention better than any other paper in the

country," in the words of Jim Wooten, the former assistant managing editor for local news, now a *Journal* editorial writer. "It's incumbent on us to do that. The opinions of the paper will be established for decades to come and Koyach's reputation will be made or broken based on how we do that week."

The timing of the Democratic convention, coming so soon after Kovach's arrival in Atlanta, puts an intolerable burden on the papers, according to Otis White, publisher and editor of a local business magazine, Georgia Trend. "They've had to put the majority of their good reporters in Iowa and New Hampshire, and they've not made much progress covering local events," White says. "We're going to get a great newspaper, but it's going to take a roundabout trip." White would like to see more - and more questioning - coverage of the domed stadium being proposed for Atlanta, less space devoted to matters he can read about in Newsweek.

Mention of national newsmagazines in such a context causes Bill Kovach to bristle. "To rely on Newsweek or Time to interpret one of the most important stories of the day, that's just counter to what I believe. Like sending your money to New York to let New York invest southern money. Why the hell should the Atlanta newspapers sit here and let The New York Times, The Washington Post, or Newsweek interpret a southern event? We're going to write our own history here."

Yet Kovach's role as spokesman for the South has been challenged from within his own organization. Dick Williams, one of the disgruntled political columnists given a less prestigious role on the papers, says Kovach's crew has been accused of "intellectual arrogance." In Williams's view, "These three guys are from another South, a South it was tough to grow up in, a South that was tough to like, that celebrated false values. They covered it on the side of right and good. They seem at times to treat the South with contempt and feel they're the ones to lead it in the path of right. They came in with a mandate to shake the newspaper up. It may be that after they've lived here for a while longer they'll come to appreciate the changes that have already taken place in the South."

Straight sex, AIDS, and the mixed-up press

The epidemic was spreading rapidly to heterosexuals — or was it?

by EDWARD M. BRECHER

uring 1986 and 1987, two health stories competed for the headlines. One concerned the great heterosexual AIDS epidemic which was said to be just around the corner, or perhaps already on the rampage among us—e.g., DATA SHOWS AIDS RISK WIDENING; INCREASE IN CASES AMONG HETEROSEXUALS IS CAUSING CONCERN. The competing story was the revelation that the heterosexual AIDS epidemic was in fact a hoax. Here, in brief, is how the two stories evolved side by side.

In The Washington Post for October 21, 1986, under the headline quoted above, Philip J. Hilts reported that "the proportion of [AIDS] cases in the United States that could be conclusively demonstrated to have come from heterosexual relations has risen from 1 percent a few years ago to 4 percent." He added that "among the 26,199 who have so far been reported to have the full set of AIDS symptoms, between 1,000 and 2,000 are reported by the CDC [Centers for Disease Controll to have contracted the disease through heterosexual sex." Hilts named a number of eminent AIDS authorities as his sources; but he named no source for these two crucial statistics. suggesting that they had perhaps been given him on a not-for-attribution basis.

The actual CDC figure for heterosexual cases at about that time, as I pointed out in the "Media Watch" department of the April 1987 *Boston Review*, was not "between 1,000 and 2,000"; it was 485. CDC officials had doctored the data by adding overnight to the 485 "true"

Edward M. Brecher, who lives in Cornwall, Connecticut, is a Fellow of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex and the author of ten books, most of them about drugs or sex. heterosexual cases an additional 571 ersatz heterosexual cases among immigrants who had acquired their infections in ways unknown, presumably before entering the United States. That gave 1,056 alleged heterosexual cases. Hilts's not-for-attribution sources had then further inflated the doctored total of 1,056 to make it "between 1,000 and 2,000." Result: the percentage of AIDS cases that, according to the *Post*, "can be conclusively demonstrated to have come from heterosexual relations" appeared to have quadrupled and could be expected to rise even higher.

This theme — a high heterosexual AIDS rate destined to rise even higher - has frequently been sounded over the past two years in newspapers and magazines: "The numbers as yet are small, but AIDS is a growing threat to the heterosexual population" (Time, February 16, 1987); REPORT ON AIDS TREND 'DIS-COURAGING'; HETEROSEXUAL CONTACT A GROWING CAUSE OF ILLNESS AMONG WOMEN (The Washington Post, April 17, 1987); "Now, however, the disease is spreading so rapidly beyond homosexuals and drug abusers that the old rules no longer apply" (U.S. News & World Report, April 20, 1987).

But beginning in 1986 there were also conflicting accounts, including an Associated Press dispatch dated September 30, 1986. When a woman has sex with an AIDS-infected man, the AP story explained, she does not necessarily acquire his infection. Indeed, she is very likely to remain uninfected following sexual intercourse with a hundred AIDS-infected men. Drawing on data from Dr. Thomas A. Peterman of the CDC, the AP reported that the odds against a woman's acquiring the AIDS virus during a single act of intercourse with an AIDSinfected man are on the order of 1,000 to 1 - with odds around 2,000 to 1 against AIDS-virus transmission from an AIDS-infected woman to a man.

These "Peterman odds" were not altogether ignored by the press; *The New York Times*, for example, mentioned

them in the tenth paragraph of its AP story on page 7 of its second section. The headline was noncommittal: NEW STUDIES FOCUS ON AIDS TRANSMISSION CHANCES.

Other similarly comforting statistics bobbed up from time to time in 1986 — for example:

- Fewer than 1 percent of newly diagnosed AIDS cases in New York City during the first nine months of 1986 were of heterosexual origin.
- Among 2,760 diagnosed cases of AIDS in San Francisco, only 11 were traceable to heterosexual contact.

But such data demonstrating the rarity of heterosexual AIDS-virus transmission sank from sight under the barrage of ominous predictions and warnings. In its Science Tuesday section on October 28, 1986, for example, The New York Times published a well-balanced roundup of the heterosexual AIDS evidence. The writer, Erik Eckholm, pointed out that among 331,000 New York City blood donors, 330,743 had tested negative for the AIDS virus; only 11 of the 331,000 had AIDS-virus infections of unknown origin that might (or might not) have been contracted during a casual heterosexual encounter. This hardly sounded like a heterosexual epidemic; but even very good news can be made to sound threatening. The Times ran this and other reassuring data unearthed by Eckholm under a far-from-reassuring headline -HETEROSEXUALS AND AIDS; THE CON-CERN IS GROWING - and it made the customary ritualistic reference in the lead and concluding sentence to "the proliferation of AIDS among heterosexuals" and to the possibility of a "runaway epidemic' among them.

here was some change for the better in AIDS reporting in 1987. Here, chronologically arranged, is my honor roll, no doubt incomplete, of journalists who contributed notably:

June 7, 1987: Like Eckholm, Mobashir Salahuddin, a medical writer for the Columbia, South Carolina, *State*,

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wrote a reassuring AIDS story that ran under a far-from-reassuring head and subhead. South Carolina's director of disease prevention had predicted that twice as many AIDS cases would be reported in that state in 1986 as in 1985. Salahuddin remembered that prediction, and when the 1986 figures became available he checked up. Instead of doubling, he learned, the number of South Carolina cases reported in 1986 was fortyfour, exactly the same as in 1985. He then added other instructive contrasts between official AIDS predictions and what was actually happening in South Carolina.

The State ran his story under a six-column banner: DEALING WITH A FATAL DISEASE. A subhead, in large type above Salahuddin's by-line, declared: "While the Number of Reported AIDS Cases in South Carolina Appears to Be Slowing Down, Officials Warn that the Figures May Be Deceptive." But nothing in the story contradicted Salahuddin's main finding: that the number of AIDS cases was increasing — if at all — much more slowly than predicted.

August 14, 1987: Robert Scheer of the Los Angeles Times turned in one of the two or three most comprehensive and best-documented heterosexual AIDS features of the year. The Times had sent him to Atlanta, with stops en route, to interview CDC scientists and others; Scheer also did his homework in California. He reported, for example, that among 3,545 San Franciscans with AIDS, only eight women and seven men even claimed to have contracted the infection heterosexually; in Los Angeles only seven men had made that claim.

Months earlier, I had explained in the *Boston Review* how 571 ersatz heterosexual cases born abroad had been added to the CDC's 485 true heterosexual cases. Scheer's account demonstrated that I had been duped: those 485 "true" heterosexual cases were also suspect.

Of 174 male AIDS cases classified as "heterosexual" in a CDC report, about seventy were New Yorkers. On subsequent conscientious rescreening by New York City's Health Department, Scheer revealed, only three men instead of seventy could be found "who appear to have contracted the disease from sex with women." Even in those three cases, heterosexual origin of the infections was only presumptive; they could not properly be described, in The Washington Post's phrase, as "conclusively demonstrated to have come from heterosexual relations." Similar rescreening elsewhere has similarly turned up AIDS patients who initially claimed to have acquired their infections heterosexually and who were so recorded in CDC statistics - but who subsequently turned out to be closet gays or closet needle

Among the nationally known AIDS authorities who talked on the record to Scheer about heterosexual AIDS exaggerations were Dr. Harold W. Jaffe, the CDC's chief of AIDS epidemiology; Dr. Robert C. Gallo of the National Cancer Institute; and Dr. Rand L. Stoneburner, who had transferred from the CDC to the New York City Health Department. Others spoke even more frankly, but not for attribution. Dr. Gallo explained why: many government scientists, he told Scheer, were reluctant to discuss on the record the rarity of heterosexual AIDS for fear of contradicting statements by their superiors.

These or other officials also told Scheer, on a not-for-attribution basis, that "the potential for heterosexual [AIDS] spread was exaggerated in order to obtain increased government funding." One source, described as "a top federal doctor working on AIDS," was more explicit: "If this wasn't seen as a heterosexual problem, the money wouldn't be there for research."

The Los Angeles Times, to its credit, ran twenty-nine paragraphs of Scheer's story on its front page, plus twenty-eight paragraphs inside — a length and place-

ment few other papers allotted even to AIDS scare stories.

October 13, 1987: A noteworthy review of heterosexual AIDS data by B.D. Colen was published in "Discovery," a Sunday section of both the Long Island and New York City Newsdays. Colen's story featured an interview with one of this country's leading epidemiologists, Dr. Alexander Langmuir, who had retired from the CDC. Colen tracked him to a hill on Martha's Vineyard.

Dr. Langmuir explained that, to generate an epidemic, each 100 infections with a disease must give rise to more than 100 fresh infections — "not much more, but a little bit more." If, on the average, each 100 infections give rise to only 50 fresh ones, "you have no epidemic; it dies out and dies out rapidly. . . . That's perhaps my fundamental difference with my colleagues at CDC: they don't see that point." Even among San Francisco homosexuals, each 100 old infections were giving rise in 1986 and 1987 to far fewer than 100 fresh ones.

Dr. Langmuir, an enthusiastic exponent of "shoe-leather epidemiology," gave Colen a striking example of what that phrase means. A New York City AIDS investigator used shoe leather to visit the homes of AIDS patients classified as heterosexual. In one home, "the investigator was smart enough to say, 'I've got to go to the bathroom,' and he looked in the cabinet and there were syringes and needles."

either Dr. Langmuir nor other AIDS authorities with whom Colen spoke were willing to say straight out that the AIDS virus cannot be spread through heterosexual vaginal or oral intercourse, or even through an AIDS patient's tears. Robert Scheer, I myself, and others have encountered that same scientific insistence on hedging reassuring statements. Colen justified the hedging with an apt analogy:

Each time you drive across a bridge, there is a statistically significant chance it will collapse. Most of us take such a risk for granted and go about our lives. So it is with AIDS. When a scientist says that AIDS is not spread by contact with tears "as far as we know at this time," he is simply telling the truth. . . If you asked the same scientist if it is possible that the George Washington Bridge will collapse when you are on it, he would reply:

Millions of people have safely crossed the bridge, but it is theoretically possible that it will collapse when you are on it. Would that keep you from going to New Jersey?

Colen also explored the chronic infighting over AIDS statistics between the CDC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the White House.

In June 1987, President Reagan had called for a fresh AIDS study based on updated statistics. Several times thereafter, Colen reported, the CDC planners sent their proposals for such a study "through HHS to the White House, only to have them rejected. Only recently did the CDC learn that the White House never saw the proposals. They were apparently rejected at HHS because the proposals weren't what HHS thought Reagan wanted." A White House source told Colen: "We wondered why we weren't getting what we expected from the CDC for about three months."

Colen did not speculate on why HHS had blocked the CDC proposals. My own speculation goes like this:

The HHS official most directly and personally involved in the heterosexual AIDS issue was Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. Clearly he was using the heterosexual AIDS scare to frighten wives and husbands into durable marital fidelity, as in this widely publicized passage from a 1986 surgeon general's report:

Couples who maintain mutually faithful monogamous relationships (only one continuing sexual partner) are protected from AIDS through sexual transmission. If you have been faithful for at least five years and your partner has been faithful too, neither of you is at risk. If you have not been faithful, then you and your partner are at risk. If your partner has not been faithful, then your partner is at risk which also puts you at risk. This is true for both heterosexual and homosexual couples.

The CDC proposals to the White House blocked by HHS would have blasted the foundations out from under the surgeon general's argument for strict monogamy. HHS was no doubt right in concluding that this was not what President Reagan wanted.

November 1987: Michael A. Fumento published in *Commentary* a broad review of heterosexual AIDS risks, covering many of the points above and adding others. Fumento explained, for

example, why the risk of AIDS-virus transmission is so very much greater during anal intercourse, including heterosexual anal intercourse — indicating that, in the few cases where the virus is in fact transmitted heterosexually, it is far more likely to be through anal rather than vaginal or oral sex.

"Primary" transmission of the AIDS virus occurs, Fumento noted, when a member of a high-risk group — a homosexual or IV drug user, for example — becomes infected. "Secondary transmission occurs when the primary recipient passes the virus on heterosexually to a member of a non-high-risk group . . . tertiary transmission occurs when the secondary recipient then passes on the virus to another heterosexual." These tertiaries might then "beget fourthgeneration recipients, and so on" — thus generating a heterosexual epidemic.

But are there any tertiary cases? Since the CDC could not tell him, Fumento checked the four cities with the largest number of AIDS cases. Los Angeles reported only thirty heterosexual cases, San Francisco only eighteen, and Houston only twelve — numbers which included all secondary cases and which were therefore too small to leave much room for tertiary cases. New York, with 11,217 AIDS cases, reported that the number of heterosexuals among them who had contracted their infections from non-high-risk partners was "zero."

Fumento also contrasted the reassuring data he was presenting in Commentary (circulation 40,000) with the terrifying predictions and theories featured in four mass-circulation publications—Time, Life, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report. Lack of space prevents me from doing justice here to all of Fumento's data, but reporters who haven't done so would be well advised to read his Commentary piece for themselves before tackling their next AIDS assignment.

November 15, 1987: John Crewdson made a number of fresh points in the *Chicago Tribune*. His most startling evidence established that the heterosexual AIDS epidemic was not just a myth but a deliberate hoax. This evidence, for obvious reasons, came from not-for-attribution sources, but it was buttressed by inter-agency documents his sources leaked to him.

The major AIDS public relations campaign of 1987 was AIDS Awareness Month in October, built around the slogan "AIDS: The Killer That Doesn't Discriminate." Heterosexuals as well as homosexuals and women as well as men. the campaign stressed, are alike at risk. A month before this campaign was to begin, his sources told Crewdson, a meeting was held at which White House officials, CDC officials, and Secretary of Education William J. Bennett were present. The highlight of this meeting was a confrontation between Bennett and CDC director Dr. James Mason. Here is Crewdson's account of the confrontation, based on information from two officials who were present:

Bill Bennett said, "You mean this thing is not exploding into the heterosexual community?" one White House official recalled. And Dr. Mason said, "No, it's not." And Bennett said, "Well, why have you been telling everybody that it is?"

Officials present then asked Bennett and Mason what they were going to do about the upcoming AIDS Awareness Month campaign. There was no answer. AIDS Awareness Month with its slogan "The Killer That Doesn't Discriminate" proceeded on schedule.

The Chicago Tribune ran Crewdson's first seven paragraphs on page 1, and seventy-five additional paragraphs inside.

Crewdson did not speculate on why AIDS Awareness Month was not modified to fit the reassuring new facts, but, once again, I will:

Just as Surgeon General Koop was using the heterosexual AIDS scare to promote marital fidelity, so Education Secretary Bennett was clearly using it to



promote premarital chastity. He had prepared a twenty-eight-page handbook titled "AIDS and the Education of Our Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers," and planned to mail out 300,000 copies during AIDS Awareness Month, sending them to school principals, school boards, and parent groups. An additional 200,000 copies would be held for free distribution on request.

"Young people should be told that the best way to prevent the sexual transmission of AIDS is to refrain from sexual activity until as adults they are ready to establish a mutually faithful monogamous relationship," the Bennett handbook stressed. It warned against relying on condoms which "can and do fail." "Teach restraint as a virtue" was Secretary Bennett's alternative to the condom. When confronted at the White House meeting with CDC Director Mason's updated information on heterosexual AIDS-virus transmission, Secretary Bennett may well have decided that his goal, premarital chastity, justified telling school children and the public untruths about heterosexual AIDS.

he CDC made available in December 1987 the updated statistical analysis President Reagan had requested back in June. It was a sixty-page document and it turned out to be a dud. Much of it was devoted to proving what everybody had long known: there's a lot of AIDS out there among gay males and intravenous drug injectors. The "fresh" estimate of total AIDS infections differed little from one that had been hurriedly put together back in June 1986. There was also the usual bureaucratic hedge: more time was needed for more research. The media can hardly be faulted for almost wholly disregarding that report.

But buried in it were highly significant data. Table 14, for example, estimated the number of exclusively and occasionally homosexual American males, the number of regular and occasional injectors of illicit drugs, and the number of hemophiliacs. That left 142 million American women and men aged fifteen through fifty-nine who belong to none of these AIDS risk groups. According to Table 14, an estimated 30,000 of those 142 million non-risk-group Americans are infected with the AIDS virus.

This figure of 30,000 stood in startling contrast to the featured finding of the report: the alleged 945,000 to 1,400,000 AIDS-virus infections in the U.S. population as a whole.

Even the CDC's 30,000 figure, moreover, is both grossly inflated and misleading. It is inflated because it includes homosexuals and illicit-drug injectors who concealed those facts when initially questioned. It is also inflated because it is based on blood tests of military recruits; use of the vastly larger and more reliable data from blood-bank donors, cited elsewhere in the CDC report, would have vielded a figure of 8,520. The 30,000 figure is misleading because no mention is made of infections acquired through heterosexual anal intercourse. From what is known of the frequency of anal intercourse among U.S. heterosexuals, the ease of anal AIDS-virus transmission, and the rarity of vaginal and oral AIDS-virus transmission, this is clearly a major omission. If closet gays, closet drug injectors, and cases of anal transmission are subtracted from 8,520, the number of heterosexual AIDS-virus infections acquired through vaginal or oral sex by those 142 million non-risk-group Americans could be very close to zero.

Did you see any discussion of these matters in the publications you read? I didn't. The CDC's bureaucratic ploy — concealing essential data in the fourteenth of fifteen statistical tables — was almost completely effective.

eanwhile, throughout 1987, leading newspapers and newsweeklies had continued to treat heterosexual AIDS as if it were serious news. Why?

Let me offer two explanations, one critical of the media and one exculpatory. No doubt there is some truth in both.

First, Americans these days take delight in being scared out of their wits — by horror movies, bloodcurdling TV and VCR melodramas, and Stephen King's novels, for example. The news media know that scare stories, including scare stories about heterosexual AIDS, sell papers and attract massive audiences to prime-time newscasts and sweep-week TV specials; hence (with some honorable exceptions) their stress on the terrifying

in their coverage of heterosexual AIDS.

The exculpatory explanation begins by pointing out that the press has cooperated in carrying urgent public health messages to those at risk since the days of cholera, malaria, yellow fever, and, later, polio. So when AIDS came along, journalists and editors knew exactly what to do: interview the best experts you can find, and relay their public health warnings to your audience. Add some startling details to make the story more readable and memorable. Then leave the office content in the knowledge that you have done your bit to safeguard the health of your readers.

Watergate and the Iran-contra hearings taught the news media a lesson about trusting government officials. The Great Heterosexual AIDS Hoax teaches the same need for skepticism — but expands it to include the statements of many (not all) scientists employed by the government.

The public at large believed the bad news about AIDS, not the reassuring news. According to an October 1987 Gallup poll, when respondents were asked to name the country's most serious public health problem, nearly five times as many named AIDS as named cancer. Many young heterosexuals, female and male alike, profoundly altered their sexual behavior in response to the AIDS warnings relayed by the news media. Some had sex with fewer partners, some wore condoms during vaginal sex, some abstained from oral sex and "deep kissing." A smaller number abstained from sex altogether, and even from dating. A few dedicated their lives to escaping the menace of heterosexual AIDS, trying to avoid all physical contact with other human beings. What will the reaction be when members of the generation now in its teens and twenties realize that they have been hoaxed? Will they, justly or unjustly, blame the news media?

The vast resources of personnel, funding, and media attention wasted on heterosexual AIDS have been diverted from understaffed, underfunded, and underpublicized public health projects that really could help curb AIDS — projects concerned with needle-sharing and anal sex. Seldom if ever have such fervent efforts been dedicated to delivering the wrong public health message to the wrong recipients.

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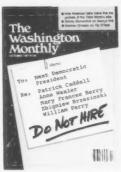


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BOOKS

Club Fed

Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country

by William Greider Simon & Schuster. 799 pp. \$24.95

by MARK HERTSGAARD

First with his celebrated Atlantic article, "The Education of David Stockman," and now with Secrets of the Temple, William Greider has done more than any other journalist to unearth the hidden history of U.S. economic policy in the Reagan era. Pointing out that the Federal Reserve is perhaps the single most powerful economic institution in the country, Greider argues persuasively that during this period it was really Fed chairman Paul Volcker more than President Ronald Reagan who was running the U.S. economy. Yet how much attention has the general press paid to the machinations of the Fed? (Such specialized publications as The Wall Street Journal did watch monetary policy closely, but, as Greider observes, their "dialogue of opinion was . . . restricted to those who shared the same assumptions as the bondholders.")

Greider's account of the Federal Reserve, substantial portions of which ran in *The New Yorker* last November, demonstrates that a conspiracy of silence has surrounded the Federal Reserve since its founding in 1913. The long-prevailing myth has held it to be a "distinctly non-partisan organization" whose management of money is largely "a technical matter," beyond the ken of ordinary citizens. Federal Reserve officers had their own reasons for secrecy, but joining the self-censorship were the educational system, elected politicians, and, not least, the mass media.

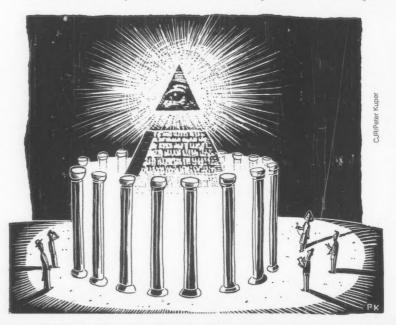
Mark Hertsgaard's On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency will be published in June by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Greider is quite aware of the friendliness of corporate-owned news organizations toward fellow bulwarks of the established order, but he believes that the reasons for this behavior go deeper than mere self-interest. A cultural taboo. grounded in the Fed's performance of "the ancient priestly function: the creation of money," has been the primary inhibiting force. To question the dictates of the nation's sacred temple, its central bank, would be blasphemy. Indeed, the press routinely scolds those few politicians brave enough to criticize the Fed, thus encouraging the continued absence from American politics of what Greider refers to as the money debate.

During the Reagan years, this handsoff stance towards the Fed caused the press to miss important stories time and again. In 1981, it led reporters to ignore Volcker's brooding warnings about the pain ahead and to focus instead on the upbeat predictions emanating from the White House. Thus was public debate discouraged over the government's pursuit of two contradictory economic policies at once: a stimulative fiscal policy (Reagan's massive tax cuts and military spending), and a restrictive monetary one (Volcker's squeezing of the money supply) — a contradiction that Greider likens to simultaneously gunning the accelerator and stomping on the brake.

For the rest of Reagan's presidency the press would devote far more attention to the ceaseless White House-Congress tussle over shaving the deficit than to the Fed's manipulation of the money supply. (Partly this was because the dispute over spending and taxes was conducted out in the open and lent itself to the dramatic play-by-play style of reporting so beloved by Washington reporters: Who ruled Capitol Hill — Tip O'Neill or Ronald Reagan?)

The real story, however, was elsewhere. Wall Street wisdom notwithstanding, large deficits did not necessarily mean high interest rates. As Greider notes, during the 1980s "the price of money moved up or down quite independently of what was happening to the federal deficits." Interest rates were sensitive above all to shifts in the money supply; it was the Fed's monetary policy that drove the economy into the 1982 recession-depression. Volcker's tight-



money strategy (which Reagan twice endorsed) pushed U.S. interest rates to their highest levels in the twentieth century and triggered what Greider terms, borrowing Veblen's phrase, "the slaughter of the innocents." Greider makes a point of connecting Federal Reserve actions with their flesh-and-blood consequences, and he is quietly and eloquently outraged by the human damage done in the pursuit of the bankers' panacea of "sound money": the ravaged economic landscapes of Iowa and Detroit and the debt-strangled economies of Mexico and other so-called less-developed countries are juxtaposed with the record profits of U.S. commercial

Even after the Fed, convinced by the failure of the Penn Square bank and by the impending default of Mexico that the banking system itself was in peril, finally expanded the money supply in July 1982, news coverage continued to slight the Fed's decisive influence over the strength of the economic recovery. Acting on their ever-present fear of resurgent inflation, Federal Reserve governors in the summer of 1984 reversed themselves and pushed real interest rates even higher than they had been during the recession. Yet, Greider notes, "The news media did not report the significance of what the Fed was doing to the economy, not then and not even later when the effects of the Fed's tightening were fully visible."

The Fed was choosing to defend wealth and the financial side of capitalism and to let workers and the productive economy take the loss. Yet the American public could hardly protest, Greider observes, "for the public did not know that the unelected government in Washington had decided to end the boom."

Rather than warn people that the election-year prosperity figured to be "a false, brief surge," the press "amplified the illusions" fostered by Michael Deaver and his colleagues in the White House propaganda apparatus that it was "morning again in America." The press also failed to draw attention to a "fundamental shift in the American political agenda" — the new view that 7 percent was now the "natural" rate of unemployment, supposedly the best that could

be accomplished without risking renewed inflation. News coverage focused instead on the emergence of the yuppies, an affluent new class that "could not have been more distant from what was really happening to the patterns of American consumption." Even when the press did take notice of Volcker's victims, it rarely shed much light on the underlying causes of their distress: "The exhaustive press and television coverage on the plight of the failing farmers almost never mentioned any connection with monetary policy or the Federal Reserve."

Secrets of the Temple is an awesome achievement, a book destined to rank as one of the half-dozen best dealing with the Reagan era. Greider does a splendid job of reporting - his thirty-four interviews with Volcker and other Federal Reserve governors yield astonishingly candid remarks - but he freely admits that any of the major news organizations could do just as well tomorrow if only they set their minds to it. Unfortunately, the average newspaper relegates most stories about the Federal Reserve to the business section, where they are written with all the verve and adversarial spirit of a Fortune 500 corporation's annual report.

Aggressive and insightful coverage of the Federal Reserve is particularly needed now, in the wake of the stockmarket crash. Perhaps the most disquieting passage in *Secrets* comes when Greider notes the uncanny parallels between the state of the U.S. economy in the Roaring Twenties and the Go-Go Eighties. It could all happen again, especially if the Fed is allowed to repeat the mistake of putting its loyalty to the bondholder class above its responsibility to the commonweal.

Sometime after the October stockmarket crash, former colleagues at *The Washington Post* asked Greider what the paper should do to improve its coverage of the story. His answer was simple. "I told them, 'Start covering the Fed,' "he recalled in a recent conversation. Alas, judging from the *Post*'s news columns since then — which have had no more to say about the operations of the Fed than the rest of the mainstream press — the advice has fallen on deaf ears.

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The incomparable Edna

The Corpse Had a Familiar Face: Covering Miami, America's Hottest Beat

by Edna Buchanan Random House. 275 pp. \$17.95

by GREGORY JAYNES

Reading a profile of Edna Buchanan, the indefatigable Miami Herald police reporter, in The New Yorker some time back, I thought that if I were a book editor I'd ask that woman for a manuscript. Upon learning she had won a Pulitzer two springs ago, the same old stirrings set in. Today I am happy to report that I am still not a book editor, but my instincts are on track: Buchanan is out with The Corpse Had a Familiar Face.

The book sucks you through it like a Buchanan special on a Sunday morning

Gregory Jaynes writes the "About New York" column for The New York Times.

front page, above the fold. There isn't a paragraph in it bigger than a spoonful of Cheerios, but that is her knack, to slap a morsel before the reader and keep his stomach growling, reading on:

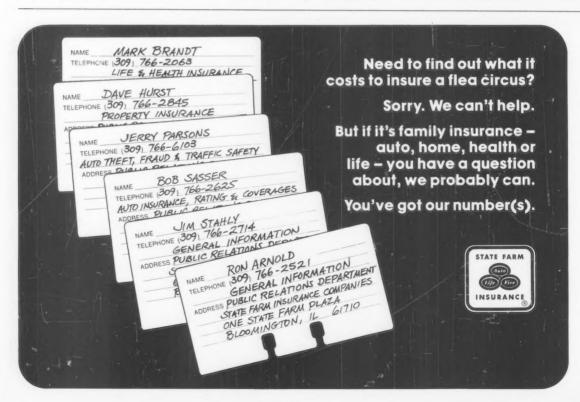
- "He punched the counter girl so hard her ears rang, and a security guard shot him — three times."
- "A man making his way to a vacant seat in a darkened downtown movie theater stepped on a stranger's toes and said, 'Excuse me.' The irate moviegoer killed him anyway."
- "A man shot to death a lifelong friend who sat in his chair; he had warned him not to sit there. 'It wasn't even any kind of a special chair,' a detective said, 'just a plain old ordinary chair.'

Edna (though we have never met, it doesn't feel cheeky to use the familiar; everybody else does with Edna, it seems) boiled up out of the bleakness of Paterson, New Jersey, about a half century ago. Her father, a Polish factory worker, skipped out on his family when Edna was seven. After that there were years in public schools that the girl detested, as well as years in grim jobs

around Paterson — the nadir, according to the author, being the summer "I plucked off loose threads and wrestled almost-finished coats right-side out at the South Paterson coat factory where my mother worked." To this day, when someone remarks what an unusual occupation she has for a middle-aged lady, Edna says it beats working in a coat factory in Paterson.

She had grown up reading the crime stories in the New York tabloids aloud to her Ukrainian grandmother, and once she was encouraged by a seventh-grade English teacher to pursue her own writing. Later, after high school, while working in an office job at Western Electric, she took a creative writing course at night school, and again was encouraged. Still later, after she and her mother had taken a holiday in Miami Beach and had decided there was no place lovelier under the sun, she got a job with the Mianii Beach Daily Sun. Credentials were of little importance to the now-defunct Sun. Hustle was, and Edna had it.

Five plucky years on the Sun won her a berth on The Miami Herald, where she





Edna
Buchanan:
"When bad
things happen
I always want
to know why"

scrapped for a piece of the action, finally cornering the market on crime. Lord knows, nobody else wanted it. By the time murder in Miami went through the roof in 1981, leading the nation, Edna had the catbird seat. She writes now that it was agony then when she had to squeeze six to a dozen murders into a single roundup.

"Each victim's last story had to be limited to just a paragraph or two," she notes regretfully. She would cram the little space with detail. "I felt obliged. Often it was the first and last time the victim's name ever appeared in a newspaper. Even at that, I felt a sense of guilt for such a cursory send-off."

At the time of the writing of this book, Edna reckoned she had given 5,000 corpses their send-offs. Naturally, then, this is a work filled with stiffs. But there is more to it than people who died violently. She offers lessons in investigative reporting ("detail, detail, detail") in the same chapter in which she tells cops their reports are atrocious ("cops talk funny and write funny"). She sits a fence with the police overall, gigging the toadies,

the truculent, the unforthcoming, while being sympathetic to their tribulations. Certain favorites are taken down a notch now and then, but more often than not they are flattered. Miami, for all its troubles, is lovingly brushed. "All I have ever missed about New Jersey is the summer harvest of juicy beefsteak tomatoes — and the pizza."

Two personal chapters — "sidebars," they are called, and they concern her cats and dogs — tend to jar. One suspects that after all these years of trying to write objectively and to stay the hell out of her own news stories, she did the same with her book, only to be told there wasn't enough of her in it. Pets may have been the easiest way to avoid the discomfort of truly opening up. She does mention two brief disastrous marriages, however. "I know a few judges now. If I ever begin to talk marriage again, they will have me committed until the urge subsides."

A joy throughout is that snap, crackle, and pop prose of hers, at times even teasing: "He took me where no other man did before — to the morgue." I

How Are Today's Presidential Candidates Sold

THE SPOT

The Rise of Political Advertising on Television New Revised Edition Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates

What do Gallo Wines, Bartles and Jaymes, and Ronald Reagan have in common? Hal Riney, one of the hottest ad men of the 1980s.

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BOOKS

don't know where she learned it, but I suspect it all goes back to that famous old lead, the one about the woman who walked the last mile to the execution chamber last night "and sat down in the only unoccupied chair."

It's a wry book, an ironic book, and a serious piece of work. If I had been a book editor, I would have been pleased to sign this one up. If I owned a newsroom, I'd deed the author a corner. And if I ran a police department, I'd walk out when Edna Buchanan walked in, saying I was only there to keep her office warm.

What Stone unturned

The Trial of Socrates

by i. F. Stone Little, Brown. 282 pp. \$18.95

by PETER SCHRAG

For an unreconstructed civil-libertarian journalist and amateur classicist like Izzy Stone, the question that gave rise to this book must have been irresistibly tempting: How is it that the presumably democratic people of classical Athens would prosecute and sentence to death a revered old man like Socrates — he was seventy at the time — for so mild an offense as unwelcome speech? In seeking to answer that question, Stone demonstrates that there can be new angles even on 2,400-year-old stories.

The Trial of Socrates was a retirement project, completed on the eve of Stone's eightieth birthday, meant not so much to impeach Socrates as to exonerate Athens. And while the complexities of language involved - the nuances of ancient Greek that escaped even the scholars would have intimidated most ordinary mortals, particularly those with no more than a semester of college Greek, the task for an inveterate document reader and autodidact like Stone was probably no more daunting than the workaday forays that he took for so many years through the gobbledegook of the Pentagon and State Department.

Socrates was tried and sentenced in 399 B.C. I assume that no journalist has

Peter Schrag is the editorial page editor of The Sacramento Bee.

ever reworked an older story, but for those of us who toiled on evening papers, the principle is familiar enough. Take what was in the morning paper and rewrite it in such a way as to prove the A.M. had it all wrong, or better yet, that it really didn't have the story at all.

Not that Stone concludes that Socrates deserved his hemlock; nor does he suggest — indeed he dismisses the idea, occasionally suggested by others — that the charge of corrupting the youth of Athens might have meant that he led them into pederasty. Stone doesn't tell us whether Socrates was above such pleasures, but we know that the Greeks were not, and thus would never have tried anyone on that ground.

What Stone does instead is make it pretty clear that Socrates, charming, brilliant, and funny as he appeared to be, was a pretty nasty fellow: a political nihilist bitingly contemptuous of Athenian democracy and its people, whom he regarded as an ignorant herd; cozy with the so-called tyranny of the Thirty, among them his old students Critias and Alcibiades, who overthrew the democracy before being overthrown themselves; callously neglectful of his wife and children and, in the end, apparently trying to provoke his jurors into the death penalty that he finally received. Socrates, it seems, wanted to die.

From the beginning, Stone regarded what he was doing as a piece of investigative reporting complicated by the fact that his two important sources, Plato and Xenophon, were not always reliable. Most of the historians and classicists who have since produced libraries full of exegetical works on their texts have marched in step with their reverent accounts of the old man's life. But that, of course, is part of the fun: if you can't find new sources, read the old ones in a new way, or analyze them differently, both of which Stone does very well indeed.

The job Stone faced was nothing less than rescuing the truth from Socrates' martyrdom; the poetic genius of Plato, Stone says, made Socrates into "a secular saint, the superior man confronting the ignorant mob with serenity and humor." That takes Stone through the dialogues and through Homer, through

Greek drama and poetry, through Aristotle and Thucydides and, of course, through scores of modern writers. Along the way Stone demonstrates, among other things, how much of the conventional scholarly wisdom is founded on some terrible misreadings of Greek comedy. There was, he says, no "witch hunt in ancient Athens."

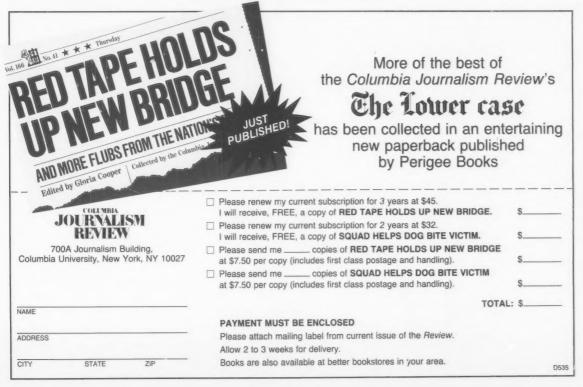
In Andrew Patner's little book of interviews, I.F. Stone: A Fortrait, published in February by Pantheon, Stone talks about how "if I had been Socrates" lawyer . . . I could've gotten him off." But Stone is finally forced to conclude that, even if Socrates had wanted to get off, he could have done so only by appealing to Athens' commitment to free speech - and Socrates was an elitist who didn't believe in general free speech, only in "his right to speak, as the superior man," and who hated the city's egalitarianism. All his life he had spoken derisively of democracy because its leaders must pay attention to the opinions "of the motley multitude in their assembly, whether about painting or music, or for that matter, politics."

In that sense, Socrates could have no defense. At the same time, however, Stone found no smoking gun in the documents: the worst he can suggest in the way of real criminal acts is that Socrates failed to resist the oligarchs and failed to exile himself during their rule, as many others did. Having made a powerful case for Athenian democracy - the Greeks, Stone points out, had four words for freedom of speech, the Romans none - and having shown how it was sorely tried and embittered by two interludes of autocracy, he still is forced to admit that putting Socrates to death "remains Athens' tragic crime."

hat has always made Izzy Stone a special journalist (and what lifts any journalist above the hacks) is not his digging skills, but his commitment to his subjects — the fact that he wants to understand the thing he writes about, not just as a story, but for its own sake. In that respect classical Athens is no different from the politics of the Vietnam War or the activities of Senator McCarthy. On every page, Pat-

ner's book reinforces that view of the man: Stone, despite his terrible eyesight, has always been a voracious reader not only of government documents, but of the best of the world's literature. To ask where the journalist ends and the scholar begins is thus to misunderstand what the best of scholars and journalists have always shared, whether you're talking about Ben Franklin, Edmund Wilson, or Walter Lippmann.

And so you don't ask whether Stone is a classicist in this book, or a historian, or the retired editor of I.F. Stone's Weekly and still a frequent contributor to a variety of journals. He's all of those things. But you are also forced to observe that a journalist — a journalist like Stone - is more likely to ask the sort of questions that are asked in this book than is a scholar, and especially the university scholars of our time, fixated as most of them are on the nits of their own specialities. A good journalist knows that in almost every field, no matter how old or how overworked, if you pursue good, big questions, you're likely to get interesting answers.



BRIBFINGS

by GLORIA COOPER

Master of manipulation

An Appointment with the Spin Doctor, by Eric Alterman, *Regardie's*, October 1987

What do Robert McFarlane, Charles Z. Wick, and Edwin Meese III have in common — apart, of course, from the so-what-else-is-new fact that all three Reaganauts were hauled before Congress to explain their more questionable acts? A less obvious link is the legendary lawyer who helped them save — and maybe even polish — their respective professional skins: Leonard Garment, the man whom Wick reportedly regards as the Mother Theresa of Washington.

Writer Eric Alterman traces Garment's serendipitous career from its humble beginnings at Brooklyn Law School to its present peak of high-profile power, pausing briefly to note his sense of instant kinship with Nixon when they met as colleagues at the New York law firm of Mudge Rose, his subsequent role in the Nixon White House as resident do-gooder liberal, and the lingering speculation that he doubled as Woodward's Deep Throat. Alterman also takes time to straightforwardly register several more personal facts: Garment's depression following his first wife's suicide under an assumed name in a run-down Boston hotel, and his marriage to Suzanne Weaver, a conservative Washington writer twenty-two years his junior, whom he met when both were working at Patrick Moynihan's U.N. office for human rights. But Alterman's central, serious theme is Garment's mastery of the art of manipulating the press.

As a classic example of Garment's skill as a media Svengali, Alterman documents the experience of former national security adviser McFarlane, whose attempt at suicide in the midst of the Iran-contra scandal threatened to damage beyond repair his future Republican career - but who, following Garment's brilliant strategy of sympathetic press releases and one-on-one interviews (with Daniel Schorr on NPR, Barbara Walters on ABC, and Maureen Dowd of The New York Times), managed to emerge as an overburdened public servant, honorable to a fault. Meanwhile, Garment himself was appearing on This Week with David Brinkley and the CBS News Nightwatch, as well as in the Outlook section of The Washington Post and in Commentary magazine, none of which, Alterman observes drily, did his client any harm.

Similarly, the author reports, when USIA director Wick became a target of media outrage for secretly taping phone calls, Garment was on the scene, defending his client to reporters and deftly calming the storm. As for Meese, **/hose confirmation as attorney general depended on the public's confidence that he wasn't guilty of unethical (not to say illegal) acts, Garment's triumph is evidenced by the size of his bills: \$200,000 (at \$250).

per hour) for time spent drafting press releases and talking with reporters.

(Of course, not every Garment battle in the court of public opinion is an ultimate win, as became abundantly clear when, only a few weeks after the Alterman piece appeared, Garment's personal, passionate campaign on behalf of the Supreme Court nomination of Robert Bork - an unrelenting barrage of petitions, ads, white papers, and press releases, reinforced by appearances on Nightline and Today - came to its end. In "The War Against Robert H. Bork," a lengthy post-mortem on the strategies and tactics of the left and the right that appeared in the January issue of Commentary magazine, Suzanne Garment, Leonard's wife and active partner in the blitz, assigns partial blame for the Bork defeat on "lopsided," "negative" coverage by the media, whose "bias was clearly more than accidental." A more accurate explanation would seem to be that the Garments were simply outgunned. Fittingly enough, in an October 26 New York Times wrap-up of the Garments' "obsessive" campaign, Martin Tolchin reported that, at midnight of the day on which Republican Senate leaders had finally decided to throw in the towel, Garment could be seen in a Capitol phone booth — talking to a reporter.)

Lobbying reporters is only one of the secrets of Garment's success. As Alterman notes, in Garment's line of lawvering, knowing obscure precedents is far less useful than knowing Ben Bradlee's phone number, or how to set up an interview with Barbara Walters, or how to hone a witty comment that makes both client and reporter look good. Useful, too, is having close friends who also happen to be journalistic superstars — Safire, McGrory, Pincus, Sawyer, to name a few. It's a combination of talents, in Alterman's view, that has helped invest Garment with a kind of institutional power that stays in place while administrations come and go. Considering the press's traditionally skeptical attitude toward such power, one might think that today's sophisticated journalists would be somewhat resistant to Garment's manipulative charms. Well, yes, one might think so - but as Garment's former boss once said in a slightly different context, that would be





The great American flood

Leaking: Who Does It? Who Benefits? At What Cost? by Elie Abel, A Twentieth Century Fund Paper, 1987

Thomas Paine did it in 1779, when, in the anonymously published Common Sense, he revealed some embarrassing facts he was privy to as secretary of the foreign affairs committee of the Revolutionary congress: the French court, while still officially at peace with Great Britain, had entered into a secret deal to supply the colonists with desperately needed arms. Leonard Garment (see above) did it in 1987, when he described for reporters of The New York Times and the Baltimore Sun some secret testimony by Robert McFarlane that put his client in a somewhat kinder light: McFarlane had told investigators that he had prepared a document that would have allowed President Reagan to plausibly deny that he had known about the initiation of the arms sales to Iran even though he had in fact approved it. In the intervening centuries between those two events the flow of information to the American public has been steadily fed by a stream of similar leaks. This seventy-five-page paper explores the theory and practice of the

The author, who currently holds the Chandler chair in communications at Stanford University and was formerly dean of Columbia[†]s Graduate School of Journalism, taps a deep well of sources for his report — scholarly dissertations, interviews with veteran journalists, sociological analyses, and congressional studies, as well as his own experiences in covering Washington for *The New York Times* and NBC. He also includes a liberal sprinkling of illustrative government leaks, and the circumstances surrounding them, in administrations past and present, paying particular attention to the Reagan years, which by all accounts and for various

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scary reasons have been the most sievelike of all.

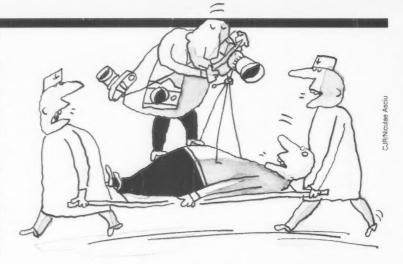
The result is a comprehensive update on a democratic phenomenon that no thoughtful observer, least of all Abel, thinks will ever disappear. Certainly not with the conditions of secrecy that prevail: some 1,500,000 topsecret documents locked in Defense Department safes alone, most of them trivial but all of them tempting, Abel notes, to leak-hungry reporters. Not with all those officials cleared to handle top secret information: how, he asks, can four million federal officials approved for access to classified stuff take the system seriously? Not with the ever-erupting policy disputes and personal rivalries that move individuals and factions to find a way to advance their goals. And certainly not with a profession that gives its highest rewards to those of its members who most eagerly accept a bid to the popular Washington dance.

And an awkward two-step it is, Abel suggests, with the leakers doing the leading and reporters always in danger of taking a fall. To help maintain some balance, Abel suggests, the press should make a few moves of its own. To editors, he recommends the general adoption of The Washington Post's Watergate-inspired rule that anonymous information must be verified by at least two independent sources, while warning against the "trust-me" syndrome (also Watergateinspired) that has made editors so reluctant to ask reporters just who their sources are. To reporters, he stresses the value of identifying the motives, biases, or interests of the (unnamed) source of the leak - facts that are obviously useful for the public to know but that are included only rarely. Such modest reforms, Abel believes, could help protect the position of the journalist, the credibility of the organization, and the integrity of the news. Anyway, they couldn't hurt.

Picture puzzles

Special Issue on Photojournalism Ethics, Journal of Mass Media Ethics, Spring/Summer 1987

Are those guys with the cameras really ethical illiterates, or does it just seem that way? And if they're not all cases of arrested moral development, how, after all those daily tramplings on catastrophe and grief, can they possibly sleep at night? In an effort to better understand the innermost workings of television photojournalists, Robert M. Steele, a professor of broadcast journalism at the University of Maine, immersed himself for a tenweek period in the day-to-day newsgathering operations of two major-market stations —



sitting in on story conferences, accompanying photojournalists on assignment, and conducting dozens of private, open-ended interviews. Here, in the opening article of a special issue devoted to various aspects of photojournalism ethics, he reports on the disquieting results.

As human beings, Steele found, TV photojournalists are as morally sensitive, ethically aware, and emotionally empathetic as the rest of us, and even capable of acknowledging that, if ever they were to find themselves in the position of the subjects they shoot, they'd run the other way. As cameralugging professionals, however, they carry other values that usually get the upper hand: the need to beat the competition, impress their peers, and meet the expectations of "the enemy" (the common term, Steele discovered, by which they refer to their producers). Indeed, the "best" photojournalists, Steele reports, are those who are viewed as able to suppress their natural sympathies in order to get the "necessary" footage. Production and aesthetic values also weigh in, as does loyalty to the organization (not to the public, Steele

As might be expected, the photojournalists have developed various mechanisms to help them cope with what they unlaughingly call "producer's disease." Some simply block from memory the stories they do each day. Others resort to black humor. Many justify their intrusions by pointing to potentially positive effects — for instance, a shot of a drowned child being pulled from a pool may serve to help others avoid a similar fate. Still others try to reconcile the conflicting sets of values by seeking a kind of golden mean, minimizing direct intrusion on a sensitive situation by using a zoom lens. One photojournalist resolves the dilemma in his own

telling way: "I don't shoot blood," he explained to Steele. "If I did, someone back there [the producers and editors in the newsroom] would be sure to edit it into the story."

Steele's report serves as an excellent point of departure for related themes. The chairman of the Radio-Television News Directors Association's ethics committee outlines the reasons why TV news photographers are treated as pieces of equipment and systematically removed from ethical decision-making (one such reason being, ironically enough, their "built-in sense of detachment"); he recommends more shared responsibility and even allowing the photographer on occasion to control the final product. A newspaper staff photographer describes the pain of being called a leech, a vulture, a lover of blood and gore; it's a pity, he observes, that the castigating public can't be with him in the darkroom when he breaks down and cries. A friend of the family of the Kent State student, a photo of whose death became a national icon and won a Pulitzer Prize, deplores the distorting effects on public perception of such a limited slice of reality: instead of a sense of moral outrage, she believes, the message conveyed to students was "Look what can happen to you." In a particularly memorable essay, educator-photographer A. D. Coleman draws on personal experiences to explore the ethics of street photography and the rights of the innocent bystander. And several articles consider the matter of photographic deception, from the finer points of conventional retouching to the dangerous temptations of the new digital technology.

Individually, each of these pieces takes an interesting angle on a sharply focused problem in the field. Together, they widen the perspectives for continuing debate.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Why Detroit needs a JOA

TO THE REVIEW:

By the time you publish this letter, the proposed Detroit joint operating agreement may be an entirely academic subject, but, even if it is only for the record, Stephen Barnett's article in your January/February issue ("Detroit's High-Stakes 'Failure' Game'') deserves some comment. Barnett believes that "the losses at the Free Press and the News . . . plainly result from strategic decisions by their owners" and cites as an example the fact that the Free Press's retail ad rates "averaged 22 percent below those in other markets on weekdays and 39 percent below on Sundays. These rates alone, if raised to par, would have yielded \$14 million in added revenue for the Free Press in 1985 and wiped out its loss."

This ignores the reality that daily newspapers' advertising rates vary widely among individual markets and papers. They are constrained not only by the rate practices of their immediate local daily newspaper competitors, but by those of other media. Under these competitive pressures, newspapers' share of national consumer advertising dropped from 21 percent in 1960 to 11 percent in 1987. More significantly, their share of retail advertising fell from 50 percent to 37 percent. Local television and radio advertising is now four-fifths as big as dailies' local display advertising. In Detroit, as elsewhere, major retailers like K-Mart have cut deeply into their newspaper budgets in favor of direct mail and free weeklies. It is utterly fanciful to believe that a paper like the Free Press could maintain its page volume of retail advertising after a 22 percent rate hike to some mythical "par" - even if there were no News in the picture fighting for the same business.

Barnett joins those critics of the JOA who have argued that the Detroit papers could solve their problems by charging the reader more. He points out that the Free Press sells for twenty cents, the News for fifteen, while "some 90 percent of the country's dailies sell for twenty-five cents or more." But elsewhere he contends that "the News continued to push circulation while the Free Press held back" and correctly points out that the paper that has the most readers in a two-paper city wins a disproportionate share of advertising. The first argument contradicts the second,

since experience shows that a newspaper loses readers, and thus makes its advertising sales problems tougher, when it raises its circulation rates. (Both Detroit papers will inevitably have to do so as newsprint prices go up.)

Since Barnett goes out of his way to dump on John Morton, one of the country's most highly respected analysts of newspaper economics [for having written about the JOA without disclosing that he had been retained by Gannett's law firm to help with the JOA application], I hasten to add that both Knight-Ridder and Gannett help pay my wages. Even if they didn't, I would still want Detroit to be at least a two-paper town. Barnett's reasoning, if the Justice Department follows it, would make that outcome less likely.

LEO BOGART Executive vice-president and general manager Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. New York, N.Y.

TO THE REVIEW:

The tone and implications of Stephen Barnett's article were quite cynical. They seemed to be grounded more in an intense dislike of the JOA concept than in careful study of the facts in the Detroit case.

To the 2,200 Free Press employees whose future is at stake, the situation is anything but a game. With such catchy but misleading phrases as "JOA-hungry chains" and "Chapman's sackcloth," Barnett badly distorted the real and serious situation in Detroit.

Barnett acknowledges that large amounts of money have been lost by the Free Press. But his article suggests that both the losses and the application for relief under the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970 represent some sort of sinister conspiracy between Gannett and Knight-Ridder. This simply is not true. The enormous losses suffered by both papers in Detroit during the 1980s are a reflection (as administrative law judge Needelman found) of the fierce head-to-head competition for survival in that market and of the same economic realities that caused the death during the same period of second-place papers in a number of cities.

The Free Press's operating losses since 1979 total \$100 million. In addition, during that period Knight-Ridder has invested \$96

million in capital improvements in Detroit. The Free Press has made a valiant effort to cut into the News's lead and to reduce its losses — but the News has remained dominant, maintaining its circulation lead and 60 percent share of advertising revenues. Any hope that the News's competitive strategy of maintaining its dominant position would change because of the pressure of its own losses vanished when Gannett acquired the News in 1986.

Barnett suggests that Knight-Ridder's Detroit losses could be casually written off as an "investment" by the company's shareholders and are of no serious consequence. This demonstrates Barnett's lack of understanding of the fiduciary responsibility that a publicly owned company has to its shareholders.

In his late-December ruling, the administrative law judge found that, despite its smaller share of circulation and advertising linage, the *Free Press* is the pricing leader in both circulation and advertising.

The judge said, "There can be no serious question that between 1979-1986 the Free Press had deep operating losses, that it did not generate an adequate cash flow to cover actual operating expenses, that given its poor financial performance it was unlikely to find funding elsewhere, and that without advances from Knight-Ridder (or some other parent) it could not continue as a going concern on a stand-alone basis."

The judge also said, "Intervenors have also argued that there may be available to the *Free Press* alternative forms of financing should Knight-Ridder decide to discontinue its largess. There is no support in the record for this proposition."

This is why the situation is so serious. Barnett asks, "Is the *Free Press* in probable danger of financial failure"? One would think this test requires more than a roughly 50-50 chance of losing the competitive battle, at some time in the indefinite future, if both JOA applicants continue their strategy of allout warfare." Here Barnett seems to suggest the solution lies in:

- A gracious decision by the stronger *Detroit News* to raise its prices and thus provide relief to the *Free Press*. (The Gannett chairman has testified he would not do this.)
- Pricing collusion between Knight-Ridder and Gannett, which is illegal.

Or the adoption by the Free Press of some ill-defined, second-tier strategy. He fails here to inform your readers that newspapers in Washington, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Buffalo, Baltimore, and elsewhere which pursued such a strategy — because their competitors gave them no choice — are now dead, their presses still forever.

Finally, Barnett says, "If the Detroit JOA is not approved, there is plenty of reason to think Gannett and Knight-Ridder would change their policies to stanch their losses." This reflects a total failure to understand the Detroit situation. The sad fact is that the final ruling on the JOA will determine the survival of the Free Press.

On January 21, the Knight-Ridder board of directors instructed the company's management to cease publishing the *Free Press* if the JOA is not ultimately approved. We

can only hope that the attorney general will see the facts as they are and will avoid the intellectual and legal flaws that are the basis for conclusions by both Barnett and the administrative law judge.

FRANK N. HAWKINS, JR. Vice president/corporate relations and planning Knight-Ridder, Inc. Miami, Fla.

Stephen R. Barnett replies: Mr. Bogart and Mr. Hawkins make a number of points, though neither of them questions any of the facts in my article.

• Mr. Bogart's poor-mouthing of newspaper advertising is unwarranted. In suggesting that the ad rates of the Detroit newspapers are kept as low as they are by competition from other media, he points to a drop from 1960 to 1987 in newspapers' share of total advertising. But most of the drop occurred before 1970. As Judge Needelman found: "After suffering a sharp decline following the initial growth of television, newspaper advertising is now growing faster than either television or radio." Moreover, newspapers outside Detroit, which charge "much higher" ad rates, "are flourishing," and it is "virtually certain" that ad prices for the combined Detroit papers "will increase if a JOA is approved." The judge hence gave "no weight" to testimony that neither Detroit paper "is likely to initiate an advertising price increase because their pricing flexibility is limited by competition from other me-

• It would indeed be "utterly fanciful," as Mr. Bogart says, to believe that the Free Press (or any paper) could maintain its

The Detroit JOA: what the judge said

The recommendation by administrative law judge Morton Needelman on the proposed joint operating agreement between the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* (see my article "Detroit's High-Stakes 'Failure' Game,'" CJR, January/February) was announced on December 30, 1987.

Needelman recommended that the U.S. attorney general reject the proposed JOA. Needelman found that Gannett's News was "leading" Knight-Ridder's Free Press when the JOA was negotiated in April 1986, but was not "clearly dominant." Rather, "the News was suffering deep losses of its own; the Free Press was in striking distance of the total circulation lead, which the News had only been able to hold by discounting its already low cover prices; and the News's advertising lead, which was also sustained by severe discounting, was vulnerable to a change in the circulation lead."

Needelman said the JOA should be denied because the Free Press had failed to prove it was "facing irreversible conditions which will lead to . . . the downward spiral" characteristic of a failing newspaper. Instead, the losses suffered by the Free Press were "traceable to the parent's strategy of seeking future domination and profitability (or a favorable JOA) at the expense of present profits." Knight-Ridder and Gannett both were following this strategy, Needelman wrote, "in the belief that failure too had its reward in the form of JOA approval."

Stephen R. Barnett is a professor of law at the University of California at Berkeley.

As to whether Detroit can sustain two competing papers, Needelman found that "Detroit was perceived by the *Free Press* and *News* as one of the richest, most attractive newspaper markets in the nation, and one which could sustain two profitable papers at higher circulation and advertising prices." But, he added, "as one might expect, Detroit cannot sustain two profitable papers when both are practically being given away."

Needelman rejected the views of witnesses supporting the proposed JOA. The testimony of newspaper analyst John Morton (see sidebar to the January/February article) was found to be "hardly entitled to any weight when considered in the light of his pre-litigation assessment of the Detroit newspaper war." The publishers' other expert witness was James Rosse, professor of economics and provost at Stanford University. Needelman noted that Rosse "had previously testified in practically all other litigated JOA cases about the crucial importance of the downward spiral as a reliable indicator of probable failure." The trends that were "so essential to Rosse's analysis" in other cases, however, "were not even charted by him in Detroit because there was no downward spiral," leaving a "gaping hole" in the publishers' case, Needelman wrote.

Needelman also gave "little weight" to the "witness-stand threat" by Knight-Ridder chairman Alvah Chapman that he would recommend closing the *Free Press* if the JOA was denied. Needelman concluded: "We know for certain that under the blanket of a JOA, both papers will settle back into the by STEPHEN R. BARNETT

quiet life without any competition whatsoever. It remains to be seen whether without a JOA these interdependent firms will modify their competitive strategies" to stop their losses, a question of marketplace behavior that "should be left, as it usually is, to the free market itself."

Proponents of the JOA had thirty days to file objections to Needelman's recommendation, and opponents fifteen days to reply. The case thus was due to go to Attorney General Edwin L. Meese III in mid-February. Whatever Meese decides, the losers can go to court.

No attorney general has yet turned down a JOA, but no administrative law judge has previously recommended against one. Meese's decision thus will test an attorney general's ability, or desire, to say a billiondollar "no" to the two biggest newspaper publishers in the country.

Might politics figure in Meese's decision? One top Knight-Ridder executive apparently thought so. Robert Singleton, Knight-Ridder's senior vice-president for finance and a member of its executive committee, wrote to the firm's chairman and president on September 6, 1985, concerning the JOA negotiations with Gannett: "Another factor that needs to be kept in mind and discussed with Al [Neuharth, Gannett's chairman] is that the political climate is right for a JOA. During the next three years, it is essential that we get this accomplished if there ever is to be a JOA in Detroit." Singleton did not testify at the Detroit hearing, so no one got to ask him what he meant.

"page volume" of advertising after hiking rates substantially. Of course, the number of pages sold would decline as the price per page rose. The question is whether total revenues would increase. On this question it was not me, but Free Press management, that calculated in an August 1985 memo quoted by Judge Needelman: ". . . if competitive pricing becomes rational and consistent with other markets around the country, the Free Press would have generated another \$14 million in advertising for the year 1985. We would have been profitable without a circulation price increase."

• But it is true, as Mr. Bogart and Mr. Hawkins say, that the Free Press cannot unilaterally raise prices while confronted with the current price-cutting strategy of the News. I never suggested otherwise, and neither did Judge Needelman. Because of the competition for market share and especially for the circulation lead, it's necessary to consider the competitive strategies of both papers, both at the time the JOA was negotiated and if the JOA is denied.

• The competitive position of the Free Press when the JOA was negotiated was not what Mr. Hawkins claims. He calls the News "dominant," but Judge Needelman (on whose findings Mr. Hawkins elsewhere relies) ruled that "the Free Press is not dominated by the News." With respect to the total circulation lead - "an overriding concern" at both papers, the judge found - Mr. Hawkins is technically correct when he speaks of the News "maintaining its circulation lead." But Judge Needelman found "persuasive evidence that on or about the date of the announcement of the JOA, the Free Press had all but eliminated the News's daily circulation lead."

Judge Needelman did not find, as Mr. Hawkins claims, that the losses of the Detroit papers during the 1980s reflect "the same economic realities that caused the death during the same period of second-place papers in a number of cities." The judge found that only one city larger than Detroit — Philadelphia — lacks newspaper competition, that several smaller cities have it, and that "at higher circulation and advertising prices, Detroit can sustain two profitable papers even at the current level of the city's economic performance."

• Most important, the "fierce head-to-head competition" that produced the losses in Detroit was aimed not so much at "survival," as Mr. Hawkins asserts, as at either dominance or a JOA. When Mr. Hawkins quotes Judge Needelman's finding that the Free Press "... could not continue as a going concern on a stand-alone basis," he drops the next sentence: "On the other hand, its

poor financial performance must be evaluated in the context of a deliberate Knight-Ridder strategy of striving for future market dominance and profitability (or a JOA) at the expense of present profits." As the judge said, both papers were operating "in the belief that failure too had its reward in the form of JOA approval."

Take away the reward for failure, and both papers will have to reconsider their strategies. For, as the judge found, the Free Press will not enter the fatal downward spiral "so long as Knight-Ridder remains in Detroit," and hence "there is no end in sight" for losses at the News "so long as Gannett and Knight-Ridder persist in maintaining present pricing policies." In this situation it would not require what Mr. Hawkins calls a "gracious decision" by the News to raise its prices. It would only require a rational, ""c. interested decision.

If, with the reward of failure out o, grasp, each Detroit paper decided to mode') its strategy so as to raise prices to normal levels and make a profit again (as both did through the 1970s), such parallel conduct would not be the illegal "pricing collusion" that Mr. Hawkins deplores. It would be no more illegal than the parallel conduct of seeking either market dominance or a JOA, with both papers taking care to keep the Free Press in the red, that the papers have been pursuing. It would be no more than what Free Press management suggested in an October 1985 presentation quoted by Judge Needelman: "Within the limits of the law and sensible business practices, we would hope the News would adopt more realistic (meaning higher) prices in both advertising and circulation.'

• As Mr. Hawkins's final paragraph reports, Knight-Ridder now has chosen to hold a gun to the head of the Free Press, swearing to shoot unless the attorney general hands over the JOA. If the attorney general (who is supposed to consider only the evidence produced at the hearing) agrees instead with Judge Needelman and the Justice Department's antitrust division, Knight-Ridder will be forgiven if it reconsiders and decides to stay in Detroit (where the Free Press in January moved to later, more competitive deadlines made possible by full operation of its expanded plant). Otherwise, Knight-Ridder can sell the Free Press to someone who is willing to compete.

The case for freebies

TO THE REVIEW:

I'm writing in response to an article called "Field and Freebie" that ran in your November/December issue. I am an outdoor writer. My column "Sparks From The Campfire" is in its thirty-fifth year of publication and appears in a number of papers. I write a magazine story a month or another column in up to four minor magazines a month, yet if it were not for Social Security I would be just about on the dole.

We are supposed to cover the scene, report on new products (lines, rods, reels, baits, and so on). How would you suggest we write honestly about all these things without our ever having seen or tried them? Would you as a reader take my advice if I had to admit to you that I had not used any of that hipment? Certainly you don't advocate max we should actually go out and buy all that equipment ourselves?

I don't look for handouts—I do buy some of the equipment, despite objections from my wife, who feels we need the money for other things. And so I appreciate the writer's discount, knowing full well what the markup is on these products. I accept any freebies on the condition that if they work I will write about them and if they don't work for me I will give them to some kid who may have better luck with them.

I went to the national conference of the Outdoor Writers Association of America in Kalispell, Montana. It was the first conference I could afford to go to in years and I thought it was run very well. Had I not gone there, I would never have used some of the products the manufacturers so kindly gave us to try, and both I and my readers might never have had any firsthand information on them — or we might have had to propagate the canned releases they normally send, which praise any and all of their products to high heaven.

Without some help from chambers of commerce and manufacturers many of us could never have afforded to go to other states, stay overnight at motels, or write about parts of the country that people should really know about and see personally. Nor could we have written intelligently about products which are used there.

Manufacturers can spend fortunes on television commercials that last seconds; I guess they don't miss a few small items which can all be charged off to advertising. So who is hurting, except our holier-than-thou critics?

SYD HERMAN Manitowoc, Wis.

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the May/June issue, letters should be received by March 18. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

The Lower case

Dole and Bush dead even in Kansas polls

San Luis Obispo County, Calif., Telegram-Tribune 12/28/87

When Mussolini and the Fascists came to power in Italy, Mussolini went to the United States, where he became musical director of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Perhaps the greatest interpreter of Verdi and Wagner, he was able to conduct a 600-work repertoire entirely by memory.

The Washington Post 1/3/88

New image for hospital



Bisbee, Ariz., Gazette 10/30/87

Sadomasochism not considered normal behavior

Charleson W Va . Daily Mail 1 20 8

After Spill, Jockey's Business Falls Off

The Washington Post 12/4/87

BILL'S AUTHOR: State Rep. Stephen Freind, R-Delaware, explains legislation that would restrict abortions in Pennsylvania to members of the state House of Representatives.

Centre Daily Times (State College, Pa.) 11/25/87

Akron balks at paying flat fee to recycle energy plant adviser

Akron, O., Beacon Journal 12/9/87

Artist's end gets action at hospital

Pottsdale, Pa., Mercury 12/4/87

\$3 Million Verdict To Injured Detective Cut Nearly in Half

New York Law Journal 11/25/87

Mechanic tied to part in jet that may fail

The Arizona Republic 12/25/8

Ex-fireman starts prison for sex crimes

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Married folks survive better with cancer

Greenville, S.C. Predmont 12/4/87

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